THE THREE AGES
OF
THE INTERIOR LIFE

Prelude of Sternal £ifc

The Rev. R GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

VOLUME ONE

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IN SIGNUM

GRATITUDINIS ET FILIALIS OBEDIENTLAE

Preface

THIS work represents the summary of a course in ascetical and mystical theology which we have been giving for twenty years at the Angelicum in Rome. In this book we take up in a simpler and higher manner the study of the same subjects that we treated in two other works: *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* and *Uamour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus.* Complying with a request, we offer in this volume our preceding research in the form of a synthesis, in which the different parts mutually balance and illuminate each other. In accordance with advice from various groups, we have eliminated from this exposition discussions to which it is no longer necessary to return. The book thus conceived is accessible to all interior souls.

We have not given this study the form of a manual because we are not seeking to accumulate knowledge, as is too often done in academic overloading, but to form the mind, to give it the firmness of principles and the suppleness required for the variety of their applications, in order that it may thus be capable of judging the problems which may arise. The humanities were formerly conceived in this fashion, whereas often today minds are transformed into manuals, into repertories, or even into collections of opinions and of formulas, whose reasons and profound consequences they do not seek to know.

Moreover, questions of spirituality, because they are most vital and at times most hidden, do not easily fall into the framework of a manual; or to put the matter more clearly, great risk is run of being superficial in materially classifying things and in substituting an artificial mechanism for the profound dynamism of the life of grace, of the infused virtues, and of the gifts. This explains why the great spiritual writers have not set forth their thought under this schematic form, which risks giving us a skeleton where we seek for life.

In these questions we have followed particularly three doctors of the Church who have treated these matters, each from his own point of view: St. Thomas, St. John of the Cross, and St. Francis de Sales. In the light of the theological principles of St. Thomas, we have tried to grasp what is most traditional in the mystical doctrine of *The Dark Night* by St. John of the Cross and in the *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales.

We have thus found a confirmation of what we believe to be the truth about the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, which seems to us more and more to be in the normal way of sanctity and to be morally necessary to the full perfection of Christian life. In certain advanced souls, this infused contemplation does not yet appear as a habitual state, but from time to time as a transitory act, which in the interval remains more or less latent, although it throws its light on their entire life. However, if these souls are generous, docile to the Holy Ghost, faithful to prayer and to continual interior recollection, their faith becomes increasingly contemplative, penetrating, and full of savor, and it directs their action while making it ever more fruitful. In this sense, we maintain and we explain what seems to us the traditional teaching, which is more and more accepted today: namely, that the normal prelude of the vision of heaven, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, is, by docility to the Holy Ghost, prayer, and the cross, accessible to all fervent interior souls.

We believe also that, according to the doctrine of the greatest spiritual writers, notably of St. John of the Cross, there is a degree of perfection that is not obtained without the passive purifications, properly so called, which are a mystical state. This seems to us clearly indicated by all the teaching of St. John of the Cross on these passive purifications, and in particular by these two texts of capital importance from *The Dark Night:* "The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners"; "In the blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of beginners and proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make." [1]

We have never said, moreover, as some have asserted we did, that

[1] Bk. I, chaps. H, 14.

"the state of infused contemplation, properly so called, is the only normal way to reach the perfection of charity." This infused contemplation, in fact, generally begins only with the passive purification of the senses, or, according to St. John of the Cross, at the beginning of the full illuminative way such as he describes it. Many souls are, therefore, in the normal way of sanctity before receiving infused contemplation, properly so called; but this contemplation, we say, is in the normal way of sanctity, at the summit of this way.

Without fully agreeing with us, a contemporary theologian, who is a professor of ascetical and mystical theology in the Gregorian University, wrote about our book, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* and that of Father Joret, O.P., *La contemplation mystique d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin:* "No one could seriously dispute the fact that this doctrine is remarkably constructed and superbly arrived at; that it sets forth with beautiful lucidity the spiritual riches of Dominican theology in the definitive form given to it in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the great interpreters of St. Thomas, namely, Cajetan, Bafiez, and John of St. Thomas; that the synthesis thus presented groups in a strong and harmonious unity a considerable mass of teaching and experience of Catholic spiritual tradition; and that it allows the full value of many of the most beautiful pages of our great contemplatives to be brought out." [2]

The author of these lines adds that everything in this synthesis is

[2] J. de Guibert, S.J., *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique,* July, 1924, p. 294. See also the same author's work: *Theologia spiritualis ascetica et mystica* (Rome, 1937), pp. 374-89. On page 381 of this work Father de Guibert concedes us a great deal in teaching: "Although generous souls may ordinarily seem not really to reach perfection unless God grants them some touches of or brief participations in those graces which constitute infused contemplation, properly so called, the way or state of infused contemplation is, nevertheless, not the only normal way to the perfection of charity; and therefore souls can ascend to any degree of sanctity if they go by this way in the habitual manner."

We do not say that the state of infused contemplation is the only normal way of sanctity, but that it is at the summit of the normal way of sanctity. VVc wish to show in the present work that there is a degree of perfection and also of reparatory life which remains inaccessible as a characterized state without the passive purifications of the senses and spirit, properly so called.

In this teaching wc differ from Father de Guibert, and we think that we follow the traditional doctrine of the great spiritual writers, notably St. John of the Cross, in the passage where he speaks of the necessity of these two passive purifications for removing the defects of beginners and those of

not of equal value and does not have the same authority. It is certain that after the truths of faith and the commonly received theological conclusions, which represent what is surest in the sum of theological science, what we put forward on the authority of St. Thomas and of his best commentators does not command our adherence to the same extent as the principles which are its foundation. Yet it is difficult to subtract from this synthesis a single important element without compromising its solidity and harmony.

Has not a notable harmony already been realized when we consider that the most attentive critics recognize the admirable construction and superb growth of a doctrine?

The Carmelite Congress held at Madrid in 1923, the conclusions of which were published in the review, *El Monte Carmelo* (Burgos), May, 1923, recognized the truth of these two important points on the subject of infused contemplation (Theme V): "The state of contemplation is characterized by the growing predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and by the superhuman mode with which all good actions are performed. As the virtues find their ultimate perfection in the gifts, and as the gifts find their perfect actualization in contemplation, it follows that contemplation is the ordinary 'way' of sanctity and of habitually heroic virtue."

In his *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique* (1928), Father Tanquerey, the Sulpician, joins also in this teaching, to the extent that he writes:

> When infused contemplation is considered independently of the extraordinary mystical phenomena that sometimes accompany it, it is not something miraculous or abnormal, but the result of two causes: the growth of our supernatural organism, especially of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and of an operating grace which is itself in no way miraculous. . . . This doctrine seems clearly to be the traditional doctrine such as it is found in the works of mystical authors, from Clement of Alexandria to St. Francis de Sales. . . . Almost all these authors treat contemplation as the normal crowning of Christian life.[8]

proficients (cf. *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chaps. 8 f.; Bk. II, chaps. 2 f.). Exterior sufferings are doubtless also very purifying, but, without the passive purifications, properly so called, they are not supported with all the perfection required. Sr. John of the Cross points out *(ibid.)* that if these purifications are undergone only at intervals, the soul does not reach the summit which he speaks of.

• Nos. 1564, 1566.

With the same meaning we can quote what St. Ignatius of Loyola says in a well-known letter to St. Francis Borgia (Rome, 1548): "Without these gifts (divine impressions and illuminations), all our thoughts, words, and works are imperfect, cold, and troubled. We ought to desire these gifts that by them our works may become just, ardent, and clear for the greater service of God." In 1924, Father Peeters, S.J., in chapter 8 of his interesting study, *Vers l'union divine par les exercices de saint Ignace* (Museum Lessianum, Bruges), wrote:

> What does the author of the *Exercises* think of the universal vocation to the mystical state? It is impossible to admit that he considers it a quasi-abnormal exception. . . . His optimistic confidence in the divine liberality is known. "Few men," said the saint, "suspect what God would make them if they placed no obstacle to His work." Such, in truth, is human weakness that only a singularly generous élite accepts the formidable exigencies of grace. Heroism never was and never will be banal, and sanctity cannot be conceived without heroism. . . .
>
> In the entire book of the *Exercises,* with an insistence revealing his deep conviction, he offers to his generous disciples the unlimited hope of the divine communications, the possibility of attaining God, of tasting the sweetness of the divinity, of entering into immediate communication with God, of aspiring to the divine familiarity. He said: "The more the soul attaches itself to God and shows itself generous toward Him, the more apt it becomes to receive graces and spiritual gifts in abundance." . . .
>
> This is putting it still too mildly. The graces of prayer seem to him not only desirable, but hypothetically necessary to eminent sanctity, especially in apostolic men.[4]

This is what we wished to show in the present work. Agreement on these great questions is increasingly acknowledged, and is also more real than it seems. Some, who are professional theologians as we ourselves are, consider the life of grace, the seed of glory, in itself in order to judge what ought to be the full, normal development of the infused virtues and of the gifts, the proximate disposition for receiving the beatific vision without passing through purgatory; in other words, their full development in a completely purified soul that has profited richly by the trials of life on earth and no

[4] Father Peeters expresses himself in like manner in the second revised and augmented edition of this same work (1931), pp. 216-21.

infused contemplation is, in principle or in theory, in the normal way of sanctity, although there are exceptions arising from the individual temperament or from absorbing occupations or from less favorable surroundings, and so on.[5]

Other authors, considering especially the facts, or the individual souls in which the life of grace exists, declare there are truly generous interior souls that do not reach this summit, which is, nevertheless, in itself the full, normal development of habitual grace, of the infused virtues, and of the gifts.

Spiritual theology, like every science, ought to consider the interior life as such, and not in a given individual in the midst of rather unfavorable given circumstances. Because there are stunted oaks, it does not follow that the oak is not a tall tree. Spiritual theology, while noting the exceptions that may arise from the absence of a given condition, ought especially to establish the higher laws of the full development of the life of grace as such, and the proximate disposition to receive the beatific vision immediately in a fully purified soul.

Purgatory, being a punishment, presupposes a fault that we could have avoided and that we could have expiated before death by accepting the trials of the present life with an ever better will. We are seeking here to determine the normal way of sanctity or of a

5 This distinction explains, we believe, certain apparent contradictions in the writings of St. Teresa, which she herself has pointed out, saying that they are not real.

In many texts she speaks of the general call of interior souls to the living waters of prayer, and in other texts she speaks of particular cases. Thus she says in chapter 20 of *The Way of Perfection:* "The last chapter seems to contradict what I said when, to console those who were not contemplatives, I told them that God had made many ways of reaching Him, just as He has made 'many mansions.' " And she holds as a fact the principle of the general call, which she explains anew: "I repeat that His Majesty, being God, knows our weakness and has provided for us. He did not say: 'Let some men come to Me by some other means.' His mercy is so great that He hinders no one from drinking of the fountain of life. . . . Indeed, He calls us loudly and publicly to do so ('Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink.' John 7:37). . . . You see, sisters, there is no fear you will die of drought on the way of prayer. . . . Then take my advice; do not loiter on the road, but struggle manfully until you perish in the attempt." The restrictions made by St. Teresa do not concern the general and remote call, but the individual and proximate call, as we have explained. Cf. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 345-82.

perfection such that one could enter heaven immediately after death. From this point of view, we must consider the life of grace inasmuch as it is the seed of eternal life, and consequently it is the correct idea of eternal life, the end of our course, which must illuminate the entire road to be traveled. Movement is not specified by its point of departure or by the obstacles it encounters, but by the end toward which it tends. Thus the life of grace must be defined by eternal life of which it is the seed; and then the proximate and perfect disposition to receive the beatific vision immediately is in the normal way of sanctity.

In the following pages we insist far more on the principles generally accepted in theology, by showing their value and their radiation, than on the variety of opinions on one particular point or another proposed by often quite secondary authors. There are some recent works, already indicated, which mention all these opinions in detail. We propose another aim, and that is why we quote mostly from the greatest masters. Constant recourse to the foundations of their doctrine seems to us what is most necessary for the formation of the mind, which is more important than erudition. The secondary ought not make us forget the primary, and the complexity of certain questions ought not to make us lose sight of the certitude of the great directive principles that illuminate all spirituality. We ought particularly not to be content with repeating these principles like so many platitudes, but to scrutinize them, to probe their depths, and to revert to them continually that we may better understand them.

Doubtless such a course of action lays one open to repetition; but those who seek true theological science over and above contingent opinions which may be in vogue for several years, know that it is above all wisdom. They know that it is not so much preoccupied with deducing new conclusions, but with connecting all the more or less numerous conclusions with the same higher principles, like the different sides of a pyramid with the same apex. Then the fact that in relation to every problem we recall the loftiest principle of the synthesis is not a repetition but a way of drawing near to circular contemplation, which, St. Thomas says,[6] ever reverts to the same eminent truth the better to grasp all its potentialities, and which, like the flight of a bird, describes several times the same circle around

[6] See IIa, IIae, q. 180, a. 6.

the same point. This center, like the apex of a pyramid, is in its way a symbol of the single instant of immobile eternity, which corresponds to all the successive instants of time that passes. From this point of view, our readers will pardon us for repeating several times the same dominant themes which constitute the charm, the unity, and the grandeur of spiritual theology.

Translator's Preface

This translation of Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's synthesis of the spiritual life, *Les Trois Ages de la Vie Intérieure,* has been made possible by the interest and encouragement of Mother Mary Samuel, O.P., Mother General of the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters.

Gratitude is due especially to the Very Reverend Peter O'Brien, O.P., S.T.Lr., Ph.D., Provincial of the Province of St. Albert the Great, River Forest, Illinois, for reading the manuscript, to other Fathers of the Dominican House of Studies in River Forest for criticisms and helpful suggestions, and to Sister Mary Aquinas Devlin, O.P., Chairman of the Department of English, Rosary College, for reading the entire manuscript.

Grateful acknowledgement is also made to the Benedictines of Stanbrook Abbey for permission to use quotations from their editions of *The Way of Perfection* and *The Interior Castle;* to Thomas Baker for quotations from the *Works of St. John of the Cross;* to Benziger Brothers for the many quotations from their English edition of the *Summa Theologica;* to Burns, Oates, Washbourne for quotations from *The Dialogue.*

This translation is offered to Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary and Mediatrix of All Graces, and to St. Mary Magdalen, protectress of the Order of Preachers and patroness of the interior life, as a prayer that it may lead many souls to the contemplation of the mysteries of salvation in which they shared so profoundly.

Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P.

Foreword

Sister Mary Timothea Doyle has done us a real service in giving us this translation of Father R. Garrigou-Lagrange's classical work *Les Trois Ages de la Vie Intérieure.* Doctrinally sound, this work has been accepted for its clear presentation of the way of perfection or, as St. Francis de Sales calls it, the life of devotion. The author is profound in his studies without losing that clarity of thought which is so necessary and helpful in works on the spiritual life. Analyzing the teaching of the great masters through the centuries, he has succeeded in giving us a synthesis of their thought which cannot but be helpful to those who are seeking closer and closer union with God.

The basic thought of this book is given in the words of Our Blessed Savior: "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." We are called in our vocation as sons of God to dare to imitate divine perfection—to be participators of the divine nature. Our supernatural birthright, lost to us in Eden, was restored in the blood of the Savior on Calvary. Indeed human nature is weak, but in the grace of God it can soar to the heights of perfection and hold before it as its ideal the very perfection of God. To be in very truth in the light of Christian doctrine a son of God is the worthiest ambition of our souls.

The way is love. To be encompassed in the love of God for us and to seek always supernaturally to return to God love is the spiritual life of the Christian soul. Now love impels the soul to union with God, and God in His love gives the soul the capacity for supernatural union with Him. All the teachings on the spiritual life are synthesized in this one thought—love. Just how God leads the soul in divine love and how the soul may exercise itself in the discipline of love is the subject matter of the great works on the spiritual life.

Sublime indeed is the thought that Christian charity brings to our minds. We reach up to God, and God reaches down to us, and in divine love we are made sharers of the Divinity. All things we love in God, and because we love them in God we seek to realize in our use of them and relations with them the harmony of the divine will. Of its very nature charity is not quiescent but operative. The soul in the pursuit of the way of perfection labors tirelessly according to its state in life to bring all men to God. Were it to content itself with its own perfection, it would lose the very thing it seeks. How can we love God and not love with God? How can we find God without searching in love for the things which God loves? Certainly one of the fruits of the spiritual life is peace, but this peace postulates our conforming our wills with the divine will. All the noble aspirations of the heart of man, aspirations which so often seem unrealizable in our condition of human weakness, are answered in our seeking to be ever more and more perfect in the spiritual life.

Men are talking much these days about realism, and they tell us that in life idealism must yield to compromise. Yet in every circumstance in life we can be sons of God in supernatural union with Him. This fact is the very basis of true Christian realism. We must not and dare not be defeatists. What human nature can never do can be done in the supernatural power of divine grace. It is therefore opportune in these times to give us this translation of this classical work of the spiritual life because it strengthens us in our effort to work out more perfectly our vocation of sons of God. We can build a better world. Human weakness is not an impassable barrier. The Savior died on the cross for us and rose to glorious life. With the graces of Redemption we are strong enough to labor for the realization of God's plan and on our way to heaven to love with an operative love all those whom we meet on our pilgrimage of life.

We hope that pious souls will read this book, ponder over its pages, and gain new strength from it. It is a challenge to Christians to arise and labor unceasingly for the kingdom of Christ—wherein there is peace and true progress.

Samuel Cardinal Stritch
Archbishop of Chicago

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Introduction

Introduction

WE PROPOSE in this book to synthesize two other works, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* and *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus.* In those two works we studied, in the light of the principles of St. Thomas, the main problems of the spiritual life and in particular one which has been stated more explicitly in recent years, namely: Is the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God which results therefrom an intrinsically extraordinary grace, or is it, on the contrary, in the normal way of sanctity?

We purpose here to consider these questions again in a simpler and loftier manner, with the perspective needed the better to see the subordination of all the elements of the interior life in relation to union with God. With this end in view, we shall consider first of all the foundations of the interior life, then the elimination of obstacles, the progress of the soul purified and illuminated by the light of the Holy Ghost, the docility which it ought to have toward Him, and finally the union with God which the soul attains by this docility, by the spirit of prayer, and by the cross borne with patience, gratitude, and love.

By way of introduction, we shall briefly recall what constitutes the one thing necessary for every Christian, and we shall also recall how urgently this question is being raised at the present time.

I. THE ONE THING NECESSARY

As everyone can easily understand, the interior life is an elevated form of intimate conversation which everyone has with himself as soon as he is alone, even in the tumult of a great city. From the moment he ceases to converse with his fellow men, man converses interiorly with himself about what preoccupies him most. This conversation varies greatly according to the different ages of life; that

of an old man is not that of a youth. It also varies greatly according as a man is good or bad.

As soon as a man seriously seeks truth and goodness, this intimate conversation with himself tends to become conversation with God. Little by little, instead of seeking himself in everything, instead of tending more or less consciously to make himself a center, man tends to seek God in everything, and to substitute for egoism love of God and of souls in Him. This constitutes the interior life. No sincere man will have any difficulty in recognizing it. The one thing necessary which Jesus spoke of to Martha and Mary [1] consists in hearing the word of God and living by it.

The interior life thus conceived is something far more profound and more necessary in us than intellectual life or the cultivation of the sciences, than artistic or literary life, than social or political life. Unfortunately, some great scholars, mathematicians, physicists, and astronomers have no interior life, so to speak, but devote themselves to the study of their science as if God did not exist. In their moments of solitude they have no intimate conversation with Him. Their life appears to be in certain respects the search for the true and the good in a more or less definite and restricted domain, but it is so tainted with self-love and intellectual pride that we may legitimately question whether it will bear fruit for eternity. Many artists, literary men, and statesmen never rise above this level of purely human activity which is, in short, quite exterior. Do the depths of their souls live by God? It would seem not.

This shows that the interior life, or the life of the soul with God, well deserves to be called the one thing necessary, since by it we tend to our last end and assure our salvation. This last must not be too widely separated from progressive sanctification, for it is the very way of salvation.

There are those who seem to think that it is sufficient to be saved and that it is not necessary to be a saint. It is clearly not necessary to be a saint who performs miracles and whose sanctity is officially recognized by the Church. To be saved, we must take the way of salvation, which is identical with that of sanctity. There will be only saints in heaven, whether they enter there immediately after death or after purification in purgatory. No one enters heaven unless he has that sanctity which consists in perfect purity of soul. Every

[1] Luke 10:42.

sin, though it should be venial, must be effaced, and the punishment due to sin must be borne or remitted, in order that a soul may enjoy forever the vision of God, see Him as He sees Himself, and love Him as He loves Himself. Should a soul enter heaven before the total remission of its sins, it could not remain there and it would cast itself into purgatory to be purified.

The interior life of a just man who tends toward God and who already lives by Him is indeed the one thing necessary. To be a saint, neither intellectual culture nor great exterior activity is a requisite; it suffices that we live profoundly by God. This truth is evident in the saints of the early Church; several of those saints were poor people, even slaves. It is evident also in St. Francis, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, in the Curé of Ars, and many others. They all had a deep understanding of these words of our Savior: "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" [2] If people sacrifice so many things to save the life of the body, which must ultimately die, what should we not sacrifice to save the life of our soul, which is to last forever? Ought not man to love his soul more than his body? "Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" our Lord adds.[3] "One thing is necessary," He tells us? To save our soul, one thing alone is necessary: to hear the word of God and to live by it. Therein lies the best part, which will not be taken away from a faithful soul even though it should lose everything else.

II. THE QUESTION OF THE ONE THING NECESSARY AT THE PRESENT TIME

What we have just said is true at all times; but the question of the interior life is being more sharply raised today than in several periods less troubled than ours. The explanation of this interest lies in the fact that many men have separated themselves from God and tried to organize intellectual and social life without Him. The great problems that have always preoccupied humanity have taken on a new and sometimes tragic aspect. To wish to get along without God, first Cause and last End, leads to an abyss; not only to nothingness,

[2] Matt. 16:26.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Luke 10:42.

but also to physical and moral wretchedness that is worse than nothingness. Likewise, great problems grow exasperatingly serious, and man must finally perceive that all these problems ultimately lead to the fundamental religious problem; in other words, he will finally have to declare himself entirely for God or against Him. This is in its essence the problem of the interior life. Christ Himself says: "He that is not with Me is against Me." [1]

The great modern scientific and social tendencies, in the midst of the conflicts that arise among them and in spite of the opposition of those who represent them, converge in this way, whether one wills it or not, toward the fundamental question of the intimate relations of man with God. This point is reached after many deviations. When man will no longer fulfill his great religious duties toward God who created him and who is his last End, he makes a religion for himself since he absolutely cannot get along without religion. To replace the superior ideal which he has abandoned, man may, for example, place his religion in science or in the cult of social justice or in some human ideal, which finally he considers in a religious manner and even in a mystical manner. Thus he turns away from supreme reality, and there arises a vast number of problems that will be solved only if he returns to the fundamental problem of the intimate relations of the soul with God.

It has often been remarked that today science pretends to be a religion. Likewise socialism and communism claim to be a code of ethics and present themselves under the guise of a feverish cult of justice, thereby trying to captivate hearts and minds. As a matter of fact, the modern scholar seems to have a scrupulous devotion to the scientific method. He cultivates it to such a degree that he often seems to prefer the method of research to the truth. If he bestowed equally serious care on his interior life, he would quickly reach sanctity. Often, however, this religion of science is directed toward the apotheosis of man rather than toward the love of God. As much must be said of social activity, particularly under the form it assumes in socialism and communism. It is inspired by a mysticism which purposes a transfiguration of man, while at times it denies in the most absolute manner the rights of God.

This is simply a reiteration of the statement that the religious problem of the relations of man with God is at the basis of every

[1] Matt. 12:30.

great problem. We must declare ourselves for or against Him; indifference is no longer possible, as our times show in a striking manner. The present world-wide economic crisis demonstrates what men can do when they seek to get along without God.

Without God, the seriousness of life gets out of focus. If religion is no longer a grave matter but something to smile at, then the serious element in life must be sought elsewhere. Some place it, or pretend to place it, in science or in social activity; they devote themselves religiously to the search for scientific truth or to the establishment of justice between classes or peoples. After a while they are forced to perceive that they have ended in fearful disorder and that the relations between individuals and nations become more and more difficult, if not impossible. As St. Augustine and St. Thomas [8] have said, it is evident that the same material goods, as opposed to those of the spirit, cannot at one and the same time belong integrally to several persons. The same house, the same land, cannot simultaneously belong wholly to several men, nor the same territory to several nations. As a result, interests conflict when man feverishly makes these lesser goods his last end.

St. Augustine, on the other hand, insists on the fact that the same spiritual goods can belong simultaneously and integrally to all and to each individual in particular. Without doing harm to another, we can fully possess the same truth, the same virtue, the same God. This is why our Lord says to us: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice; and all these things shall be added unto you." [7] Failure to hearken to this lesson, is to work at one's destruction and to verify once more the words of the Psalmist: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." [8]

If the serious element in life is out of focus, if it no longer is concerned with our duties toward God, but with the scientific and social activities of man; if man continually seeks himself instead of God, his last End, then events are not slow in showing him that he has taken an impossible way, which leads nor only to nothingness, but to unbearable disorder and misery. We must again and again revert to Christ's words: "He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he

[6] Cf. St. Thomas, la llae, q.28, a.4 ad lum; Illa, q.23, a. l ad 311m.
[7] Matt. 6:33.
[8] Ps. 126:1.

that gathereth not with Me, scattereth." [9] The facts confirm this declaration.

We conclude logically that religion can give an efficacious and truly realistic answer to the great modern problems only if it is a religion that is profoundly lived, not simply a superficial and cheap religion made up of some vocal prayers and some ceremonies in which religious art has more place than true piety. As a matter of fact, no religion that is profoundly lived is without an interior life, without that intimate and frequent conversation which we have not only with ourselves but with God.

The last encyclicals of Pope Pius XI make this clear. To respond to what is good in the general aspirations of nations, aspirations to justice and charity among individuals, classes, and peoples, the Holy Father wrote the encyclicals on Christ the King, on His sanctifying influence in all His mystical body, on the family, on the sanctity of Christian marriage, on social questions, on the necessity of reparation, and on the missions. In all these encyclicals he deals with the reign of Christ over all humanity. The logical conclusion to be drawn is that religion, the interior life, must be profound, must be a true life of union with God if it is to keep the pre-eminence it should have over scientific and social activities. This is a manifest necessity.

in. THE AIM OF THIS WORK

How shall we deal with the interior life? We shall not take up in a technical manner many questions about sanctifying grace and the infused virtues that have been treated at length by theologians. We assume them here, and we shall revert to them only in the measure necessary for the understanding of what the spiritual life should be.

Our aim is to invite souls to become more interior and to tend to union with God. To do so, two very different dangers must be avoided.

Rather frequently the spirit animating scientific research even in these matters tarries over details to such an extent that the mind is turned away from the contemplation of divine things. The majority of interior souls do not need many of the critical studies indispensable to the theologian. To understand them, they would need a philo-

[9] Matt, us jo.

sophical initiation which they do not possess and which, in a sense, would hamper them who in an instant and in a different manner go higher, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi. He was astonished to see that in the course of philosophy given to his religious, time was taken to prove the existence of God. Today, occasionally exaggerated specialization in studies produces in many minds a lack of the general view needed to judge wisely of things, even of those in which they are especially interested and whose relation with everything else they no longer see. The cult of detail ought not to make us lose sight of the whole. Instead of becoming spiritual, we would then become materialistic, and under pretext of exact and detailed learning, we would turn away from the true interior life and from lofty Christian wisdom.

On the other hand, many books on religious subjects that are written in a popular style, and many pious books lack a solid doctrinal foundation. Popularization, because the kind of simplification imposed upon it is material rather than formal, often avoids the examination of certain fundamental and difficult problems from which, nevertheless, light would come, and at times the light of life.

To avoid these two opposite dangers, we shall follow the way pointed out by St. Thomas, who was not a popularizer and who is still the great classic authority on theology. He rose from the learned complexity of his first works and of the *Quaestiones disputatae* to the superior simplicity of the most beautiful articles of the *Summa theologica.* He ascended to this height so well that at the!end of his life, absorbed in lofty contemplation, he could not dictate the end of his *Summa* because he could no longer descend to the complexity of the questions and articles that he still wished to compose.

The cult of detail and that of superficial simplification, each in its way alienates the soul from Christian contemplation, which rises above these opposing deviations like a summit toward which all prayerful souls tend.

IV. THE OBJECT OF ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

One secs from the matter which ascetical and mystical theology should treat that it is a branch or a part of theology, an application of rheology to rhe direction of souls, k must, therefore, proceed

under the light of revelation, which alone gives a knowledge of the nature of the life of grace and of the supernatural union of the soul with God.

This part of theology is, above all, a development of the treatise on the love of God and of that on the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to show how they are applied or to lead souls to divine union.[10] Similarly, casuistry is, in a less elevated domain, an application of moral theology to the practical discernment of what is obligatory under pain of mortal or venial sin. Moral theology ought to treat, not only of sins to be avoided, but of virtues to be practiced, and of docility in following the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. From this point of view, its applications are called ascetical and mystical theology.

Ascetical theology treats especially of the mortification of vices or defects and of the practice of the virtues. Mystical theology treats principally of docility to the Holy Ghost, of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, of the union with God which proceeds from it, and also of extraordinary graces, such as visions and revelations, which sometimes accompany infused contemplation.[11]

We shall examine the question whether ascetical theology is essentially ordained to mystical theology by asking whether the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God that results from it is an essentially extraordinary grace, such as visions and revelations, or whether in the perfect it is not rather the eminent but normal exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are in all the just. The answer to this question, which has been discussed several times in recent years, will form the conclusion of this work.

V. THE METHOD OF ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

We shall limit ourselves here to what is essential in regard to the method to be followed.[12] We must avoid two contrary deviations

10 This explains how St. Francis de Sales could set forth all that concerns ascetical and mystical theology under the title, *Treatise on the Love of God.*

11 We are speaking of doctrinal mystical theology. It should be remembered that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries infused contemplation itself was sometimes called mystical theology.

12 In *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. ïï-47, wc dealt at greater length with the object and method of ascctical and mystical theology (the descriptive method, the deductive method, the union of the two), and we examined the position of the problem relative to the distinction between ascctical and mystical theology according to the texts of several ancient and modern writers.

that are easily grasped: one would result from the almost exclusive use of the descriptive or inductive method, the other from a contrary excess.

The almost exclusive use of the descriptive or inductive method would lead us to forget that ascetical and mystical theology is a branch of theology, and we would end by considering it a part of experimental psychology. We would thus assemble only the material of mystical theology. By losing the directing light, all would be impoverished and diminished. Mystical rheology must be set forth by the great principles of theology on the life of grace, on the infused virtues, and on the seven gifts; in so doing, light is shed on all of it, and one is face to face with a science and not a collection of more or less well described phenomena.

If the descriptive method were used almost exclusively, we would be struck especially by the more or less sensible signs of the mystical state and not by the basic law of the progress of grace, whose essential supernaturalness is of too elevated an order to fall under the grasp of observation. More attention might then be given to certain extraordinary and, so to speak, exterior graces, such as visions, revelations, stigmata, than to the normal and elevated development of sanctifying grace, of the infused virtues, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. By so doing, we might be led to confound with what is essentially extraordinary that which is only extrinsically so, that is, what is eminent but normal; to confound intimate union with God in its elevated forms with the extraordinary and relatively inferior graces which sometimes accompany it.

Lastly, the exclusive use of the descriptive method might give too much importance to this easily established fact, that intimate union with God and rhe infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith are relatively rare. This idea might lead us to think that all interior and generous souls are not called to it, even in a general and remote manner.[13] This would be to forget the words of our Lord so frequently quoted by the mystics in this connection: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

On the other hand, care must be taken to avoid another deviation that would spring from the almost exclusive use of the deductive theological method. Some souls that are rather inclined to over-

[*] Wc might also fail to distinguish sufficiently between the general and remote call and the individual and proximate call.

simplify things would be led to deduce the solution of the most difficult problems of spirituality by starting from the accepted doctrine in theology about the infused virtues and the gifts, as it is set forth by St. Thomas, without sufficiently considering the admirable descriptions given by St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, and other saints, of the various degrees of the spiritual life, especially of the mystical union. It is to these facts that the principles must be applied, or rather it is these facts, first of all well understood in themselves, that must be illuminated by the light of principles, especially to discern what is truly extraordinary in them and what is eminent but normal.

The excessive use of the deductive method in this case would lead to a confusion radically opposed to the one indicated above. Since, according to tradition and St. Thomas, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are in every soul in the state of grace, we might thus be inclined to believe that the mystical state or infused contemplation is very frequent, and we might confound with them what is only their prelude, as simplified effective prayer.[1] We would thus be led not to take sufficiently into account the concomitant phenomena of certain degrees of the mystical union, such as suspension of the faculties and ecstasy, and we would fall into the opposite extreme from that of the partisans of the solely descriptive method.

Practically, as a result of these two excesses two extremes also are to be avoided in spiritual direction: advising souls to leave the ascetical way too soon or too late. We will discuss this matter at length in the course of this work.

Obviously the two methods, the inductive and the deductive, or the analytic and the synthetic, must be combined.

The concepts and the facts of the spiritual life must be analyzed. First of all, must be analyzed the concepts of the interior life and of Christian perfection, of sanctity, which the Gospel gives us, in order that we may see clearly the end proposed by the Savior Himself to all interior souls, and see this end in all its elevation without in any way diminishing it. Then must be analyzed the facts: the imperfections of beginners, the active and passive purifications, the various

[1] Some authors, by thus proceeding too a priori, have maintained that the actual influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is necessary even for a feeble act (rewziwwr) of rhe infused virtues; for example, for an act of faith in which there is as yet no penetration or any relish of the mystery in which one believes.

degrees of union, and so on, to distinguish what is essential in them and what is accessory.

After this work of analysis, we must make a synthesis and point out what is necessary or very useful and desirable to reach the full perfection of Christian life, and what, on the other hand, is properly extraordinary and in no way required for the highest sanctity.[15]

Several of these questions are very difficult, either because of the elevation of the subject treated, or because of the contingencies that are met with in the application and that depend on the temperament of the persons to be directed or on the good pleasure of God, who, for example, sometimes grants the grace of contemplation to beginners and withdraws it temporarily from advanced souls. Because of these multiple difficulties, the study of ascetical and mystical theology requires a profound knowledge of theology, especially of the treatises on grace, on the infused virtues, on the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their relations with the great mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the redemption, and the Blessed Eucharist. It requires also familiarity with the great spiritual writers, especially those who have been designated by the Church as guides in these matters.

VI. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND THEIR RELATIONS TO EACH OTHER

We must recall here the division between ascetical and mystical theology that was generally accepted until the eighteenth century, and then the modification that Scaramelli and those who followed him introduced at that time. The reader will, therefore, more readily understand why, with several contemporary theologians, we return to the division that seems to us truly traditional and conformable to the principles of the great masters.

Until the eighteenth century, authors generally set forth under[16]

[16] To settle the question whether it is legitimate humbly to desire the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God which results from it, manifestly it is not sufficient to know this contemplation and this union from the exterior by signs. We must know their nature, and also whether they are essentially extraordinary or something eminent but normal. The practically exclusive use of the descriptive method would lead us to consider this question of nature as almost inexplicable and one about which only a few words arc written at the end of a treatise. On the contrary, it is an important question which should be treated ex *professo.*

the title *Theologia mystica* all the questions that ascetical and mystical theology treats of today. This is evident from the title of the works written by Blessed Bartholomew of the Martyrs, O.P., Philip of the Blessed Trinity, O.C.D., Anthony of the Holy Ghost, O.C.D., Thomas Vallgornera, O.P., Schram, O.S.B., and others. Under the title *Theologia mystica* all these authors treated of the purgative way of beginners, of the illuminative way of proficients, and of the unitive way of the perfect. In one or the other of these last two parts, they spoke of infused contemplation and the extraordinary graces which sometimes accompany it, that is to say, visions, revelations, and like favors. Moreover, in their introduction these authors customarily treated of experimental mystical theology, that is, of infused contemplation itself, for their treatises were directed to it and to the intimate union with God which results from it.

An example of this division which was generally admitted in former times may be found in Vallgornera's *Mystica theologia divi Thomae {1661}.* He closely follows the Carmelite, Philip of the Blessed Trinity, by linking the division Philip gave with that of earlier authors and with certain characteristic texts from the works of St. John of the Cross on the period when the passive purifications of the senses and of the spirit generally appear.16 He divides his treatise for contemplatives into three parts (the purgative way, the illuminative way, the unitive way).

i. *The purgative way, proper to beginners,* in which he treats of the active purification of the external and internal senses, of the passions, of the intellect and the will, by mortification, meditation, and prayer, and finally of the passive purification of the senses, which is like a second conversion and in which infused contemplation begins. It is the transition to the illuminative way.

This last point is of prime importance in this division, and it conforms closely to two of the most important texts from the works

le Philip of the Blessed Trinity sets forth the same ideas in the prologue of his *Summa theologiae mysticae,* ed. 1874, p. 17.

We quote Vallgornera rather than Philip of the Blessed Trinity because the division we are speaking of appears more clearly in the former's work. As regards the relative merit of these authors, Philip is notably superior. Vallgornera often copied from him *ad litteram,* as he also copied the beautiful pages of John of St. Thomas on the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In this sense, Vallgornera's work is superior to Philip's since Vallgornera copied the select passages from the best authors.

of St. John of the Cross: "The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners." [17] "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul." [18] Infused contemplation begins, according to St. John of the Cross, with the passive purification of the senses, which thus marks the transition from the way of beginners to that of proficients. Vallgornera clearly preserves this doctrine in this division as well as in the one that follows.

2. *The illuminative way, -proper to proficients,* in which, after a preliminary chapter on the divisions of contemplation, are discussed the gifts of the Holy Ghost, infused contemplation, which proceeds especially from the gifts of understanding and wisdom and which is declared desirable for all interior souls,[19] as morally necessary for the full perfection of Christian life. After several articles relating to extraordinary graces (visions, revelations, interior words), this second part of the work closes with a chapter of nine articles dealing with the passive purification of the spirit, which marks the passage to the unitive way. This also is what St. John of the Cross taught.[20]

3. *The unitive way, proper to the perfect,* in which is discussed the initimate union of the contemplative soul with God and its degrees up to the transforming union. Vallgornera considers this division traditional, truly conformable to the doctrine of the fathers, to the principles of St. Thomas, and to the teaching of the greatest mystics who have written on the three ages of the spiritual life, noting how the transition from one to the other is generally made.[21]

In the eighteenth century, Scaramelli (1687-1752), who was

17 *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.

18 *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

19 Prior to Vallgornera, Philip of the Blessed Trinity had affirmed this idea in the same terms in that part of his work in which he speaks of infused contemplation. This is the same teaching that is found also in the works of the Carmelites, Anthony of the Holy Ghost, Joseph of the Holy Ghost, and of many others whom we shall quote farther on when discussing this subject.

20 *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. II, chaps. 2, 11.

21 Another Dominican, Giovanni Maria di Lauro, in his *Theologia mystica* which appeared in Naples in 1743, divides his work in the same way, placing the passive purification of the senses as the transition to the illuminative way (p. 113), and the passive purification of rhe spirit as the disposition to the perfect unitive life (p. 303), according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross.

followed by many authors of that period, proposed an entirely different division. First of all, he does not treat of ascetical and mystical theology in the same work but in two separate works, comprising four treatises: (i) Christian perfection and the means that lead to it; (2) Obstacles (or the purgative way); (3) The proximate dispositions to Christian perfection, consisting in the moral virtues in the perfect degree (or the way of proficients); (4) The essential perfection of the Christian, consisting in the theological virtues and especially in charity (the love of conformity in the perfect). This ascetical directory does not, so to speak, discuss the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The high degree of the moral and theological virtues therein described is, nevertheless, not reached without the gifts, according to the common teaching of the doctors.

The *Direttorio niistico* is composed of five treatises: (1) The introduction, in which are discussed the gifts of the Holy Ghost and graces *gratis datae;* (2) Acquired and infused contemplation, for which the gifts suffice, as Scaramelli recognizes (chap. 14); (3) The degrees of indistinct infused contemplation, from passive recollection to the transforming union. In chapter 32, Scaramelli admits that several authors teach that infused contemplation may be humbly desired by all interior souls, but he ends by concluding that practically it is better not to desire it before receiving a special call: *"altiora te ne quaesieris";*[22] (4) The degrees of distinct infused contemplation (visions and extraordinary interior words); (5) The passive purifications of the senses and the spirit.

It is surprising to find only at the end of this mystical directory the treatise on the passive purification of the senses which, in the opinion of St. John of the Cross and the authors quoted above, marks the entrance into the illuminative way.

By a fear of quietism, at times excessive, which cast discredit on mystical theology, many authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed Scaramelli, who was most highly esteemed by them. According to their point of view, ascetical theology treats of the exercises which lead to perfection according to the ordinary way, whereas mystical theology treats of the extraordinary way, to which the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith would belong. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present period this tendency appears again clearly marked in the

M Scaramelli, *Direttorio mistieo,* tr. I, chap. 1, no. 10.

study of mental prayer by Father de Maumigny, S.J.,[23] in the writings of Bishop Farges,[24] and in the work of the Sulpician, Father Pourrat.[25] According to these authors, ascctical theology is not only distinct from mystical theology, but is separated from it; it is not ordained to it, for mystical theology treats only of extraordinary graces which are not necessary for the full perfection of Christian life. Taking this point of view, some writers even maintained that, since St. Teresa of the Child Jesus did not receive extraordinary graces, she sanctified herself by the ascetical way and not by the mystical way. Strange supposition.

In the last thirty years, Father Arintero, O.P.,[26] Monsignor Saudreau,[27] the Eudist, Father Lamballe,[28] Father de la Taille, S.J.,[28] Father Gardeil, O.P.,[30] Father Joret, O.P.,[31] Father Gerest,[82] several Carmelites in France and in Belgium,[33] Benedictines such as Dom Huijben, Dom Louismet, and several others,[34] examined attentively the bases of the position taken by Scaramelli and his successors.

As we have shown at length elsewhere,[35] we have been led, as

[28] *Pratique de l'oraison mentale,* 2e traité: Oraison extraordinaire, 8e ed. Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1911.

[24] *Les phénomènes mystiques* (Traité de théologie mystique). Paris, 1920.

[25] *La spiritualité chrétienne.* Cf. Introduction, pp. vi ff.

[28] *Evoluciôn mistica.* Salamanca, 1908. *Cuestiones misticas,* 2nd. ed. Salamanca, 1920.

[27] *La vie d'union à Dieu,* 3d ed., 1921; *Les degrés de la vie spirituelle,* 2 vols., jth ed., 1920; *L'état mystique, sa nature, ses phases,* 2nd ed., 1921.

[28] *La contemplation* (principles of mystical theology). Paris, 1912.

[28] *L'oraison contemplative.* Paris: Beauchesne, 1921. See also Louis Peeters, S.J., *Vers l'union divine par les exercises de saint Ignace* (Muséum Lessianum), 2nd ed., 1931.

[80] *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique,* 2 vols. Paris, 1927. See also the posthumous book of the same author: *La vraie vie chrétienne.* Paris, 1935.

[81] *La contemplation mystique d'après St. Thomas d'Aquin.* Paris, 1923.

[82] *Mémento de vie spirituelle,* 1923.

[88] Gabriel of St. Magdalen, O.C.D., "La contemplation acquise chez les théologiens carmes déchaussés," an article which appeared in *La vie spirituelle.*

[84] Cf. "The Inquiry" on this point which appeared in the supplement of *La vie spirituelle* from September, 1929 to May, 1931. It will be of interest to read in particular the testimony of Fathers Maréchal, S.J., Alb. Valensin, S.J., M. de la Taille, S.J., Cayré, Assumptionist, Jerome of the Mother of God, Carmelite, and Schryvers, Redemptorist.

Christian Perfection and Contemplation, chaps. 1, 2, 4, a.3, 4; chap. 5, a. 3-5; chap. 6, a. *1-5. L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* 1929, Vol. Il, Parrs IV and V. *Les trois conversions et les trois voies,* 1932, chap. 4 and appendix.

these authors were, to formulate the three following questions on the subject of the division given by Scaramelli and his successors:

1. Is this absolute distinction or separation between ascetical and mystical theology entirely traditional, or is it not rather an innovation made in the eighteenth century? Does it conform to the principles of St. Thomas and to the doctrine of St. John of the Cross? St. Thomas teaches that the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, while specifically distinct from the infused virtues, are, nevertheless, in all the just, for they are connected with charity.[36] He says, moreover, that they are necessary for salvation, for a just man may find himself in difficult circumstances where even the infused virtues would not suffice and where he needs a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost to which the gifts render us docile. St. Thomas likewise considers that the gifts intervene rather frequently in ordinary circumstances to give to the acts of the virtues in generous interior souls a perfection; an impulse, and a promptness which would not exist without the superior intervention of the Holy Ghost.[37]

On the other hand, St. John of the Cross, as we have said, wrote these most significant words: "The passive purification of the senses is common. It takes place in the greater number of beginners." [38] According to St. John, infused contemplation begins with it. And again he says: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul." [30] In this text the holy doctor did not wish to affirm something accidental, but something normal. St. Francis de Sales expresses the same thought.[40] The division proposed by Scaramelli could not be reconciled with this doctrine because he speaks of the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit only at the end of the unitive way, as not only eminent but essentially extraordinary.

2. It may be asked whether such a distinction or separation be-

[88] See la Ilae, q.68.
[87] *Ibid.,* a. i, 2, j.
[88] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.
[89] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.
[40] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chap. 3. "So it is with prayer; it is called meditation until it has produced the honey of devotion; after that it becomes contemplation." Sec the following chapters on contemplation.

tween ascetical and mystical theology does not diminish the unity of the spiritual life. A good division, in order to be necessarily basic and not superficial and accidental, should rest on the very definition of the whole to be divided, on the nature of this whole, which in this case is the life of grace, called by tradition the "grace of the virtues and the gifts";[41] for the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, being connected with charity, are part of the spiritual organism and are necessary for perfection.

3. Does not the sharply marked division between ascetical and mystical theology, proposed by Scaramelli and several others, also diminish the elevation of evangelical perfection, when it treats of it in ascetical theology, taking away from it the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, and the union which results therefrom? Does not this new conception weaken the motives for practicing mortification and for exercising the virtues, and does it not do so by losing sight of the divine intimacy for which this work should prepare us? Does it not lessen the illuminative and unitive ways when it speaks of them simply from the ascetical point of view? Can these two ways normally exist without the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost proportioned to that of charity and of the other infused virtues? Finally, does not this new conception diminish also the importance and the gravity of mystical theology, which, separated thus from ascetical theology, seems to become a luxury in the spirituality of some privileged souls, and one that is not without danger?

Are there six ways (three ascetical and ordinary, and three mystical and extraordinary, not only in fact but in essence) and not just three ways, three ages of the spiritual life, as the ancients used to say?

As soon as ascetical treatises on the illuminative and unitive ways are separated from mystical theology, they contain scarcely more than abstract considerations first on the moral and then on the theological virtues. On the other hand, if they treat practically and concretely of the progress and the perfection of these virtues, as Scaramelli does in his *Direttorio ascetico,* this perfection, according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross, is manifestly unattainable

[41] See Illa, q.62, a.2: "Whether sacramental grace confers anything in addition to the grace of the virtues and gifts." In this article, St. Thomas states that habitual or sanctifying grace perfects the essence of the soul, and that the infused virtues (theological and moral) and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost spring from it in the faculties.

without the passive purifications, at least without that of the senses, and without the cooperation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The question then arises whether the passive purification of the senses in which, according to St. John of the Cross, infused contemplation and the mystical life, properly so called, begins is something essentially extraordinary or, on the contrary, a normal grace, the principle of a second conversion, which marks the entrance into the illuminative way. Without this passive purification, can a soul reach the perfection which Scaramelli speaks of in his *Direttorio ascetico?* Let us not forget what St. Teresa says: "For instance, they read that we must not be troubled when men speak ill of us, that we are to be then more pleased than when they speak well of us; that we must despise our own good name, be detached from our kindred . . . with many other tilings of the same kind. The disposition to practice this must be, in my opinion, the gift of God; for it seems to me a supernatural good." 42 By this statement the saint means that they are due to a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, like the prayers which she calls "supernatural" or infused.

For these different reasons the contemporary authors whom we quoted above reject the absolute distinction and separation between ascetical and mystical theology that was introduced in the eighteenth century.

It is important to note here that the division of a science or of one of the branches of theology is not a matter of slight importance. This may be seen by the division of moral theology, which is notably different as it is made according to the distinction of the precepts of the decalogue, or according to the distinction of the theological and moral virtues. If moral theology is divided according to the precepts of the decalogue, several of which are negative, more insistence is placed on sins to be avoided than on virtues to be practiced more and more perfectly; and often the grandeur of the supreme precept of the love of God and of one's neighbor, which dominates the decalogue and which ought to be as the soul of our life, no longer stands forth clearly enough. On the contrary, if moral theology is divided according to the distinction of the virtues, then all the elevation of the theological virtues will be evident, especially that of charity over all the moral virtues, which it should inspire and animate. If this division is made, the quickening impulse of the41

41 St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 31, par. 21.

theological virtues is felt, especially when they are accompanied by the special inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Moral theology thus conceived develops normally into mystical theology, which is, as we see in the work of St. Francis de Sales, a simple development of the treatise on the love of God.

What, then, is ascetical theology for the contemporary theologians who return to the traditional division? According to the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas, the doctrine of St. John of the Cross and also of St. Francis de Sales, ascetical theology treats of the purgative way of beginners who, understanding that they should not remain retarded and tepid souls, exercise themselves generously in the practice of the virtues, but still according to the human mode of the virtues, *ex industria propria,* with the help of ordinary actual grace. Mystical theology, on the contrary, begins with the illuminative way, in which proficients, under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, already act in a rather frequent and manifest manner according to the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.[43] Under the special inspiration of the interior Master, they no longer act *ex industria propria,* but the superhuman mode of the gifts, latent until now or only occasionally patent, becomes quite manifest and frequent.

According to these authors, the mystical life is not essentially extraordinary, like visions and revelations, but something eminent in the normal way of sanctity. They consider this true even for souls called to sanctify themselves in the active life, such as a St. Vincent de Paul. They do not at all doubt that the saints of the active life have had normally rather frequent infused contemplation of the mysteries of the redeeming Incarnation, of the Mass, of the mystical body of Christ, of the value of eternal life, although these saints differ from pure contemplatives in this respect, that their infused

43 From this point of view, which is ours, mystical theology, properly so called, begins with the age of proficients when the three signs of the passive purification of the senses appear, as noted by St. John of the Cross *(The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 9). Infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation, contemplation which leads to close union with God, begins then in prolonged aridity, accompanied by true generosity. We shall see that these three signs of the passive purification of the senses are: (1) prolonged sensible aridity; (2) a keen desire for perfection and for God; (3) a quasi-inability to apply oneself to discursive meditation and the inclination to consider God by a simple gaze with loving attention. These three signs must exist together; one alone would not suffice.

contemplation is more immediately ordained to action, to all the works of mercy.

It follows that mystical theology is useful not alone for the direction of some souls led by extraordinary ways, but also for the direction of all interior souls who do not wish to remain retarded, who tend generously toward perfection, and who endeavor to maintain union with God in the midst of the labors and contradictions of everyday life. From this point of view, a spiritual director's ignorance of mystical theology may become a serious obstacle for the souls he directs, as St. John of the Cross remarks in the prologue of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel.* If the sadness of the neurasthenic should not be taken for the passive purification of the senses, neither should melancholy be diagnosed when the passive purification does appear.

From what we have just said, it is evident that ascetical theology is ordained to mystical theology.

In short, for all Catholic authors, mystical theology which does not presuppose serious asceticism is false. Such was that of the quietists, who, like Molinos, suppressed ascetical theology by thrusting themselves into the mystical way before receiving that grace, confounding acquired passivity, which is obtained by the cessation of acts, of activity, and which turns to somnolence, with infused passivity, which springs from the special inspiration of the Floly Ghost to which the gifts render us docile. By this radical confusion, the quietism of Molinos suppressed asceticism and developed into a caricature of true mysticism.

Lastly, it is of prime importance to remark that the normal way of sanctity may be judged from two very different points of view. We may judge it by taking our nature as a starting point, and then the position that we defend as traditional will seem exaggerated. We may also judge it by taking as a starting point the supernatural mysteries of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the redeeming Incarnation, and the Blessed Eucharist. This manner of judging *per altissimam causam* is the only one that represents the judgment of wisdom; the other manner judges by the lowest cause, and we know how "spiritual folly," which St. Thomas speaks of, is contrary to wisdom.[4]

If the Blessed Trinity truly dwells in us, if the Word actually was

[4] Sec IIa IIae, q.46.

made flesh, died for us, is really present in the Holy Eucharist, offers Himself sacramentally for us every day in the Mass, gives Himself to us as food, if all this is true, then only the saints are fully in order, for they live by this divine presence through frequent, quasi-experimental knowledge and through an ever-growing love in the midst of the obscurities and difficulties of life. And the life of close union with God, far from appearing in its essential quality as something intrinsically extraordinary, appears alone as fully normal. Before reaching such a union, we are like people still half-asleep, who do not truly live sufficiently by the immense treasure given to us and by the continually new graces granted to those who wish to follow our Lord generously.

By sanctity we understand close union with God, that is, a great perfection of the love of God and neighbor, a perfection which nevertheless always remains in the normal way, for the precept of love has no limits.[45] To be more exact, we shall say that the sanctity in question here is the normal, immediate prelude of the life of heaven, a prelude which is realized, either on earth before death, or in purgatory, and which assumes that the soul is fully purified, is capable of receiving the beatific vision immediately. This is the meaning of the words "prelude of eternal life" used in the title of this work.

When we say, in short, that infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is necessary for sanctity, we mean morally necessary; that is, in the majority of cases a soul could not reach sanctity without it. We shall add that without it a soul will not in reality possess the full perfection of Christian life, which implies the eminent exercise of the theological virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which accompany them. The purpose of this book is to establish this thesis.

VII. DIVISION OF THIS WORK

Following what we have said, we shall divide this book into five parts:

/. The sources of the interior life and its end.

The life of grace, the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the influence of Christ the Mediator and of Mary Mediatrix on us. Chris-

*" See *ibid.,* q. 184, a. 3.

tian perfection, to which the interior life is ordained, and the obligation of each individual to tend to it according to his condition.

II. The purification of the soul in beginners.

The removal of obstacles, the struggle against sin and its results, and against the predominant fault; the active purification of the senses, of the memory, the will, and the understanding. The use of the sacraments for the purification of the soul. The prayer of beginners. The second conversion or passive purification of the senses in order to enter the illuminative way of proficients.

///. The progress of the soul under the light of the Holy Ghost.

The spiritual age of proficients. The progress of the theological and moral virtues. The gifts of the Holy Ghost in proficients. The progressive illumination of the soul by the Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. The contemplative prayer of proficients. Questions relating to infused contemplation: its nature, its degrees; the call to contemplation; the direction of souls in this connection.

IV. The union of perfect souls with God.

The entrance into this way by the passive purification of the soul. The spiritual age of the perfect. The heroic degree of the theological and moral virtues. Perfect apostolic life and infused contemplation. The life of reparation. The transforming union. The perfection of love in its relation to infused contemplation, to the spiritual espousals and spiritual marriage.

V. Extraordinary graces.

The graces *gratis datae.* How they differ from the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to St. Thomas. Application of this doctrine to extraordinary graces, according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross. Divine revelations: interior words, the stigmata, and ecstasy.

Conclusion. Reply to the question: Is the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God which results from it an essentially extraordinary grace, or is it in the normal way of sanctity? Is it the normal prelude to eternal life, to the beatific vision to which all souls are called?

We could discuss here the terminology used by the mystics as

compared with that used by theologians. The question is of great importance. Its meaning and its import will, however, be better grasped later on, that is, at the beginning of the part of this work that deals with the illuminative way.

We could also at the end of this introduction set forth in general terms what the fathers and the great doctors of the Church teach us in the domain of spirituality. It will, howèver, be more profitable to do so at the end of the first part of this work when we treat of the traditional doctrine of the three ways and of the manner in which it should be understood.

Moreover, we have elsewhere set forth this teaching and that of different schools of spirituality.[46] On this point Monsignor Saudreau's work, *La vie d'union à Dieu et les moyens d'y arriver d'après les grands maîtres de la spiritualité,*[47] may be consulted with profit. It will be well also to read Father Pourrat's study, *La spiritualité chrétienne.* This work is conceived from a point of view opposed to the book mentioned above, for it considers every essentially mystical grace as extraordinary. We recommend particularly the excellent work of Father Cayré, A.A., *Précis de patrologie,*[48] in which he sets forth with great care and in a very objective manner the spiritual doctrine of the fathers and of the great doctors of the Church, including St. John of the Cross and St. Francis de Sales.[49]

46 Cf. *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, 662-769.

47 Third edition, Paris, Amat, 1921. (Les Pères grecs, les Pères latins, la doctrine mystique au XIIe, au XIIIe, au XIVe, au XVIe, au XVIIe, siècle et depuis lors.)

48 Desclée, Paris, 1930, 2 vols. *{Histoire et doctrines des Pères et Docteurs de l'Église.)*

49 *Ibid.* See the analytical table in volumes i and 2 of this work and also II, chap. 20, p. 3.

PART I

The Sources of the Interior Life and Its End

Prologue

Since the interior life is an increasingly conscious form of the life of grace in every generous soul, we shall first of all discuss the life of grace to see its value clearly. We shall then see the nature of the spiritual organism of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which spring from sanctifying grace in every just soul. We shall thus be led to speak of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the souls of the just, and also of the continual influence exercised on them by our Lord Jesus Christ, universal Mediator, and by Mary, Mediatrix of all graces.

Such are the very elevated sources of the interior life; in their loftiness they resemble the high mountain sources of great rivers. Because our interior life descends to us from on high, it can reascend even to God and lead us to a very close union with Him. After speaking, in this first part, of the sources of interior life, we shall treat of its end, that is, of Christian perfection to which it is directed, and of everyone's obligation to tend toward it, according to his condition. In all things the end should be considered first; for it is first in the order of intention, although it may be last in the order of execution. The end is desired first of all, even though it is last to be obtained. For this reason our Lord began His preaching by speaking of the beatitudes, and for this reason also moral theology begins with the treatise on the last end to which all our acts must be directed.

CHAPTER I

The Life of Grace, Eternal Life Begun

THE interior life of a Christian presupposes the state of grace, which is opposed to the state of mortal sin. In the present plan of Providence every soul is either in the state of grace or in the state of mortal sin; in other words, it is either turned toward God, its supernatural last end, or turned away from Him. No man is in a purely natural state, for all are called to the supernatural end, which consists in the immediate vision of God and the love which results from that vision. From the moment of creation, man was destined for this supreme end. It is to this end that we are led by Christ who, after the Fall, offered Himself as a victim for the salvation of all men.

To have a true interior life it is doubtless not sufficient to be in the state of grace, like a child after baptism or every penitent after the absolution of his sins. The interior life requires further a struggle against everything that inclines us to fall back into sin, a serious propensity of the soul toward God. If we had a profound knowledge of the state of grace, we would see that it is not only the principle of a true and very holy interior life, but that it is the germ of eternal life. We think that insistence on this point from the outset is important, recalling the words of St. Thomas: "The good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe";[1] for grace is the germ of eternal life, incomparably superior to the natural life of our soul or to that of the angels.

This fact best shows us the value of sanctifying grace, which we received in baptism and which absolution restores to us if we have had the misfortune to lose it.[2]

1 See Ia Ilae, q. 113, a.9 ad zum.

2 At the beginning of a treatise on the interior life, it is important to get a high idea of sanctifying grace; Protestantism, following several nominalists of the fourteenth century, has lost the conception of it. In Luther's opinion, man is justified not by a new infused life, but by the exterior imputation of

The value of a seed can be known only if we have some idea of what should grow from it; for example, in the order of nature, to know the value of the seed contained in an acorn, we must have seen a fully developed oak. In the human order, to know the value of the rational soul which still slumbers in a little child, we must know the normal possibilities of the human soul in a man who has reached his full development. Likewise, we cannot know the value of sanctifying grace, which is in the soul of every baptized infant and in all the just, unless we have considered, at least imperfectly, what the full development of this grace will be in the life of eternity. Moreover, it should be seen in the very light of the Savior's words, for they are "spirit and life" and are more savory than any commentary. The language of the Gospel, the style used by our Lord, lead us more directly to contemplation than the technical language of the surest and loftiest theology. Nothing is more salutary than to breathe the pure air of these heights from which flow down the living waters of the stream of Christian doctrine.

Eternal Life Promised by the Savior to Men of Good Will

The expression "eternal life" rarely occurs in the Old Testament, where the recompense of the just after death is often presented in a symbolical manner under the figure, for example, of the Promised Land. The rare occurrence of the expression is more easily understood when we remember that after death the just of the Old Testament had to wait for the accomplishment of the passion of the Savior and the sacrifice of the cross to see the gates of heaven opened. Everything in the Old Testament was directed primarily to the coming of the promised Savior.

In the preaching of Jesus, everything is directed immediately

the merits of Christ, in such a way that he is not interiorly changed and that it is not necessary for his salvation that he observe the precept of the love of God above all else. Such an opinion is a radical misconception of the interior life spoken of in the Gospel. This lamentable doctrine was prepared by that of the nominalists, who said that grace is a gift which is not essentially supernatural, but which morally gives a right to eternal life, like paper money which, though only paper, gives a right, by reason of a legal institution, to receive money. This doctrine constituted the negation of the essentially supernatural life; it was a failure to recognize the very essence of grace and of the theological virtues.

toward eternal life. If we are attentive to His words, we shall see how the life of eternity differs from the future life spoken of by the best philosophers, such as Plato. The future life they spoke of belonged, in their opinion, to the natural order; they thought it "a fine risk to run," [3] without having absolute certitude about it. On the other hand, the Savior speaks with the most absolute assurance not only of a future life, but of eternal life superior to the past, the present, and the future; an entirely supernatural life, measured like the intimate life of God, of which it is the participation, by the single instant of immobile eternity.

Christ tells us that the way leading to eternal life is narrow,[4] and that to obtain that life we must turn away from sin and keep the commandments of God.[5] On several occasions He says in the Fourth Gospel: "He who heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life everlasting·," [8] that is, he who believes in Me, the Son of God, with a living faith united to charity, to the practice of the precepts, that man has eternal life begun. Christ also affirms this in the eight beatitudes as soon as He begins to preach: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. . . . Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." [7] What is eternal life, then, if not this repletion, this vision of God in His kingdom? In particular to those who suffer persecution for justice' sake is it said: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." [8] Before His passion Jesus says even more clearly, as St. John records: "Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." [9]

St. John the Evangelist himself explains these words of the Savior when he writes: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He

[3] Even in the *Phaedon,* the future is thus represented.
[4] Matt. 7:14.
[5] *Ibid.,* 19:17.
[6] John 5:24; 6:40, 47, 55.
[7] Matt. 3:3-8.
[8] *Ibid.,* 5:12.
[9] John 17:1-3.

shall appear we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is." [10] We shall see Him as He is, and not only by the reflection of His perfections in creatures, in sensible nature, or in the souls of the saints, in their words and their acts; we shall see Him immediately as He is in Himself.

St. Paul adds: "We see (God) now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." [11] Observe that St. Paul does not say that I shall know Him as I know myself, as I know the interior of my conscience. I certainly know the interior of my soul better than other men do; but it has secrets from me, for I cannot measure all the gravity of my directly or indirectly voluntary faults. God alone knows me thoroughly; the secrets of my heart are perfectly open only to His gaze.

St. Paul actually says that then I shall know Him even as I am known by Him. In the same way that God knows the essence of my soul and my inner life without any intermediary, so I shall see Him without the intermediary of any creature, and even, theology adds,[12] without the intermediary of any created idea. No created idea can, in fact, represent such as He is in Himself the eternally subsistent, pure intellectual radiance that is God and His infinite truth. Every created idea is finite; it is a concept of one or another perfection of God, of His being, of His truth or His goodness, of His wisdom or His love, of His mercy or His justice. These divers concepts of the divine perfections are, however, incapable of making us know such as it is in itself the supremely simple divine essence, the Deity or the intimate life of God. These multiple concepts are to the intimate life of God, to the divine simplicity, somewhat as the seven colors of the rainbow are to the white light from which they proceed. On earth we are like men who have seen only the seven colors and who would like to see the pure light which is their eminent source. As long as we have not seen the Deity, such as It is in Itself, we shall not succeed in seeing the intimate harmony of the divine perfections, in particular that of infinite mercy and infinite justice. Our created ideas of the divine attributes are like little squares of mosaic which slightly harden the spiritual physiognomy of God. When wc think of His justice, it may appear too rigid to

[10] See I John 3:2.
[11] See I Cor. 13:12.
[12] St. Thomas, Ia, q. 12, a. 2.

us; when we think of the gratuitous predilections of His mercy, they may seem arbitrary to us. On reflection, we say to ourselves that in God justice and mercy are one and the same thing and that there is no real distinction between them. We affirm with certitude that this is true, but we do not yet see the intimate harmony of these divine perfections. To see it, we should have to see immediately the divine essence, such as it is in itself, without the intermediary of any created idea.

This vision will constitute eternal life. No one can express the joy and love that will be born in us of this vision. It will be so strong, so absolute a love of God that thenceforth nothing will be able to destroy it or even to diminish it. It will be a love by which we shall above all rejoice that God is God, infinitely holy, just, and merciful. We shall adore all the decrees of His providence in view of the manifestation of His goodness. We shall have entered into His beatitude, according to Christ's own words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." [13] We shall see God as He sees Himself, immediately, without however exhausting the depth of His being, His love, and His power, and we shall love Him as He loves Himself. We shall also see our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Such is eternal beatitude in its essence, not to speak of the accidental joy that we shall experience in seeing and loving the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, more particularly the souls whom we knew during our time on earth.

The Seed of Eternal Life in Us

The immediate vision of God, of which we have just spoken, surpasses the natural capacity of every created intellect, whether angelic or human. Naturally a created intellect may indeed know God by the reflection of His perfections in the created order, angelic or human, but it cannot see Him immediately in Himself as He sees Himself.[14] If a created intellect could by its natural powers alone see God immediately, it would have the same formal object as the divine intellect; it would then be of the same nature as God. This

[13] Matt. 25:21,23.
[14] St. Thomas, Ia, q. 12, a. 4.

would be the pantheistic confusion of a created nature and the divine nature.

A created intellect can be raised to the immediate vision of the divine essence only by a gratuitous help, by a grace of God. In the angel and in us this grace somewhat resembles a graft made on a wild shrub to enable it to bear good fruit. The angel and the human soul become capable of a supernatural knowledge of God and a supernatural love only if they have received this divine graft, habitual or sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the divine nature and in the inner life of God. Only this grace, received in the essence of our soul as a free gift, can render the soul radically capable of essentially divine operations, can make it capable of seeing God immediately as He sees Himself and of loving Him as He loves Himself. In other words, the deification of the intellect and that of the will presuppose the deification of the soul itself (in its essence), whence these faculties spring.

When this grace is consummated and inamissible, it is called glory. From it proceed, in the intellects of the blessed in heaven, the supernatural light which gives them the strength to see God, and in their wills the infused charity which makes them love Him without being able thereafter to turn away from Him.

Through baptism we have already received the seed of eternal life, for through it we received sanctifying grace which is the radical principle of that life; and with sanctifying grace we received infused charity, which ought to last forever.

This is what our Savior told the Samaritan woman, as St. John recounts: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee: Give Me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." [15] If one should ask whether these words of our Lord belong to the ascetical or the mystical order, the question would seem unintelligent; for, if our Lord is speaking here of the life of heaven, all the more do His words apply to the close union which prepares the soul for that life.

St. Thomas says: "He who will drink of the living water of grace

[18] John 4:10-14.

given by the Savior will no longer desire another, but he will desire this water more abundantly. . . . Moreover, whereas material water descends, the spiritual water of grace rises. It is a living water ever united to its (eminent) source and one that springs up to eternal life, which it makes us merit." [16] This living water comes from God, and that is why it can reascend even to Him.

Likewise, in the temple at Jerusalem on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, Christ stood and cried in a loud voice: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith: Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [17] He who drinks spiritually, believing in the Savior, draws from the source of living water, and can draw from it not only for himself but also for other souls to be saved.

On several occasions, as we have already remarked, Jesus repeats: "He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life." [18] Not only will he have it later on, but in a sense he already possesses it, for the life of grace is eternal life begun.

It is, in fact, the same life in its essence, just as the seed which is in an acorn has the same life as the full-grown oak, and as the spiritual soul of the little child is the same one that will eventually develop in the mature man.

Fundamentally, the same divine life exists as a germ or a seed in the Christian on earth and as a fully developed life in the saints in heaven. It is these who truly live eternal life. This explains why Christ said also: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." [19] "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say: Behold here or behold there. For lo, the kingdom of God is within you." [20] It is hidden there like the mustard seed, like the leaven which causes the dough to rise, like the treasure buried in the field.

How do we know that we have already received this life which should last forever? St. John explains the matter to us at length: "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death. Whosoever

[10] *Commentum in Joannem,* 4:3 ff.
[17] John 7:37 f.
'«John 3:36; 5:24, 39; 6:40, 47, 55.
[10] John 6:55.
[80] Luke 17:20 f.

hateth his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself."[21] "These things I write to you, that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God." [22] Jesus had said: "Amen, amen I say to you: If any man keep My word, he shall not see death forever." [23] In fact, the liturgy expresses this idea in the preface of the Mass for the Dead: "For to those who believe in Thee, Lord, life is only changed, not taken away"; on the contrary, it reaches its full development in heaven. All tradition declares that the life of grace on earth is in reality the seed of glory. St. Thomas delights also in saying: "For grace is nothing else than a beginning of glory in us." [24] Bossuet often expresses himself in the same terms.[25]

This explains why St. Thomas likes to say: "The good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe." [28] The slightest degree of sanctifying grace contained in the soul of an infant after baptism is more precious than the natural good of the entire universe, all angelic natures taken together included therein; for the least degree of sanctifying grace belongs to an enormously superior order, to the order of the inner life of God, which is superior to all miracles and to all the outward signs of divine revelation.[27]

The same supernatural life, the same sanctifying grace, is in the just on earth and in the saints in heaven. This is likewise true of infused charity, with these two differences: on earth we know God not in the clarity of vision, but in the obscurity of infused faith; and besides, though we hope to possess Him in such a way as never to lose Him, we can lose Him here on earth through our own fault.

In spite of these two differences pertaining to faith and hope, the life is the same because it is the same sanctifying grace and the same charity, both of which should last forever. This is exactly what

21 See 1 John 3:14 f.
22 *Ibid.,* 5:13.
23 John 8:51.
24 See IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 3 ad 2um; Ia IIae, q.69, a.2; De *veritate,* q. 14, a. 2.
25 *Méditations sur l'évangile,* Part II, 37th day, in Joan. 17:3.
28 See Ia IIae, q. 113, a.9 ad 211m.
27 *Ibid.,* q.in, a.j: *"Gratia gratum faciens* is much more excellent than *gratia gratis data";* in other words, sanctifying grace, which unites us to God Himself, is very much superior to prophecy, to miracles, and to all the signs of divine intervention.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God . . . thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him. . . . He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever: but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." [28] By the light of this principle we must judge what our interior life should be and what should be its full, normal development that it may be the worthy prelude of the life of eternity. Since sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts are intrinsically ordained to eternal life, are they not also ordained to the mystical union? Is not this union the normal prelude of the life of eternity in souls that are in truth completely generous?

An Important Consequence

From what we have just said, we may at least infer the non-extraordinary character of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and of the union with God which results therefrom. This presumption will be more and more confirmed in what follows and will become a certitude.

Sanctifying grace and charity, which unite us to God in His intimate life, are, in fact, very superior to graces *gratis datae* and extraordinary, such as prophecy and the gift of tongues, which are only signs of the divine intervention and which by themselves do not unite us closely to God. St. Paul affirms this clearly,[29] and St. Thomas explains it quite well.[30]

Infused contemplation, an act of infused faith illumined by the gifts of understanding and wisdom, proceeds, as we shall see, from sanctifying grace, called "the grace of the virtues and the gifts," [31] received by all in baptism, and not from graces *gratis datae* and extraordinary. Theologians commonly concede this. We may, therefore, even now seriously presume that infused contemplation and the union with God resulting from it are not intrinsically extraordinary, like prophecy or the gift of tongues. Since they are not

[28] John 4:10-14.

[29] Sec I Cor. 12:28 ff.; 13:1 ff.

[30] Cf. la Ilae, q. nr, a. 5: *"Gratia gratzmi faciens* is much more excellent than *gratia gratis data."*

[31] Sec Illa, q.62, a. 1.

essentially extraordinary, are they not in the normal way of sanctity?

A second and even more striking reason springs immediately from what we have just said: namely, sanctifying grace, being by its very nature ordained to eternal life, is also essentially ordained, in a normal manner, to the proximate perfect disposition to receive the light of glory immediately. This proximate disposition is perfect charity with the keen desire for the beatific vision, an ardent desire which is ordinarily found only in the union with God resulting from the infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation.

This contemplation is, therefore, not intrinsically extraordinary like prophecy, but something eminent which already appears indeed to be in the normal way of sanctity, although relatively rare like lofty perfection.

We must likewise add that the ardent desire for the beatific vision is found according to its full perfection only in the transforming union, or the higher mystical union, which consequently does not seem to be outside the normal way of sanctity. To grasp the meaning and import of this reason, we may remark that, if there is one good which the Christian ought to desire keenly, it is God seen face to face and loved above all, without any further possibility of sin. Evidently there should be proportion between the intensity of the desire and the value of the good desired; in this case, its value is infinite. We should all be "pilgrims of the Absolute" "while . . . we are absent from the Lord." [32]

Finally, as sanctifying grace is essentially ordained to eternal life, it is also ordained to a proximate disposition for us to receive the light of glory immediately after death without passing through purgatory? Purgatory is a punishment which presupposes a sin that could have been avoided, and an insufficient satisfaction that could have been completed if we had accepted with better dispositions the sufferings of the present life. It is certain, in fact, that no one will be detained in purgatory except for sins he could have avoided or for negligence in making reparation for them. Normally purgatory should be spent in this life while meriting, while growing in love, instead of after death without merit.

The proximate disposition to receive the light of glory immediately after death presupposes a true purification analogous to that in souls that arc about to leave purgatory and that have an ardent

[32] See II Cor. 5:6.

desire for the beatific vision.[33] This ardent desire exists ordinarily in this life only in the union with God which results from the infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation. Hence contemplation stands out clearly even now, not as an extraordinary grace, but as an eminent grace in the normal way of sanctity.

The keen desire for God, the sovereign Good, which is the normal proximate disposition to the beatific vision, is admirably expressed by St. Paul: "Though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. . . . For in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven. . . . Now He that maketh us for this very thing, is God, who hath given us the pledge of the Spirit." [34]

Obviously, that we may treat of questions of ascetical and mystical theology in a fitting manner, we must not lose sight of these heights as they are made known to us by Holy Scripture explained by the theology of the great masters. If there is a field in which men must be considered not only as they are, but as they ought to be, that field is evidently spirituality. One should be able there to breathe freely the air of the heights above human conventions. Blessed are those tried souls who, like St. Paul of the Cross, breathe freely only in the domain of God and who aspire to Him with all their strength.

[33] St. Thomas gives a good explanation of this keen desire for God which the souls in purgatory have. (We shall return to this point later on when we speak of the passive purifications.) Cf. IV *Sent.,* d.21, a. 1 ad quaestionem jam. "The more a thing is desired, just so much the more is its absence painful. And because the love, by which the highest good is desired after this life, is most intense in holy souls, because love is not held back by the weight of the body, and also, because the time of enjoying the highest Good has now come, unless something impedes it, for the very same reason they suffer to a great degree from the delay." Thus we would suffer greatly from hunger if deprived of food for more than a day, when it would be in the radical order of our organism to restore itself. It is radical to the order of the life of the soul, in the actual economy of salvation, to possess God immediately after death. Far from being essentially extraordinary, this is the normal way, as we see it in the lives of the saints.

[34] Sec 11 Cor. 4:16 ff.; 5:1 ff.

CHAPTER II

The Interior Life and Intimate Conversation with God

"Our conversation is in heaven."
(Phil. 3:20.)

THE interior life, as we said, presupposes the state of grace, which is the seed of eternal life. Nevertheless the state of grace, which exists in every infant after baptism and in every penitent after the absolution of his sins, does not suffice to constitute what is customarily called the interior life of a Christian. In addition there are required a struggle against what would make us fall back into sin and a serious tendency of the soul toward God.

From this point of view, to give a clear idea of what the interior life should be, we shall do well to compare it with the intimate conversation that each of us has with himself. If one is faithful, this intimate conversation tends, under the influence of grace, to become elevated, to be transformed, and to become a conversation with God. This remark is elementary; but the most vital and profound truths are elementary truths about which we have thought for a long time, by which we have lived, and which finally become the object of almost continual contemplation.

We shall consider successively these two forms of intimate conversation: the one human, the other more and more divine or supernatural.

Conversation with Oneself

As soon as a man ceases to be outwardly occupied, to talk with his fellow men, as soon as he is alone, even in the noisy streets of a great city, he begins to carry on a conversation with himself. If he

is young, he often thinks of his future; if he is old, he thinks of the past, and his happy or unhappy experience of life makes him usually judge persons and events very differently.

If a man is fundamentally egotistical, his intimate conversation with himself is inspired by sensuality or pride. He converses with himself about the object of his cupidity, of his envy; finding therein sadness and death, he tries to flee from himself, to live outside of himself, to divert himself in order to forget the emptiness and the nothingness of his life. In this intimate conversation of the egoist with himself there is a certain very inferior self-knowledge and a no less inferior self-love.

He is acquainted especially with the sensitive part of his soul, that part which is common to man and to the animal. Thus he has sensible joys, sensible sorrows, according as the weather is pleasant or unpleasant, as he wins money or loses it. He has desires and aversions of the same sensible order; and when he is opposed, he has moments of impatience and anger prompted by inordinate self-love.

But the egoist knows little about the spiritual part of his soul, that which is common to the angel and to man. Even if he believes in the spirituality of the soul and of the higher faculties, intellect and will, he does not live in this spiritual order. He does not, so to speak, know experimentally this higher part of himself and he does not love it sufficiently. If he knew it, he would find in it the image of God and he would begin to love himself, not in an egotistical manner for himself, but for God. His thoughts almost always fall back on what is inferior in him, and though he often shows intelligence and cleverness which may even become craftiness and cunning, his intellect, instead of rising, always inclines toward what is inferior to it. It is made to contemplate God, the supreme truth, and it often dallies in error, sometimes obstinately defending the error by every means. It has been said that, if fife is not on a level with thought, thought ends by descending to the level of life. All declines, and one's highest convictions gradually grow weaker.

The intimate conversation of the egoist with himself proceeds thus to death and is therefore not an interior life. His self-love leads him to wish to make himself the center of everything, to draw everything to himself, both persons and things. Since this is impossible, he frequently ends in disillusionment and disgust; he becomes unbearable to himself and to others, and ends by hating himself because

he wished to love himself excessively. At times he ends by hating life because he desired too greatly what is inferior in it.[1]

If a man who is not in the state of grace begins to seek goodness, his intimate conversation with himself is already quite different. He converses with himself, for example, about what is necessary to live becomingly and to support his family. This at times preoccupies him greatly; he feels his weakness and the need of placing his confidence no longer in himself alone, but in God.

While still in the state of mortal sin, this man may have Christian faith and hope, which subsist in us even after the loss of charity as long as we have not sinned mortally by incredulity, despair, or presumption. When this is so, this man's intimate conversation with himself is occasionally illumined by the supernatural light of faith; now and then he thinks of eternal life and desires it, although this desire remains weak. He is sometimes led by a special inspiration to enter a church to pray.

Finally, if this man has at least attrition for his sins and receives absolution for them, he recovers the state of grace and charity, the love of God and neighbor. Thenceforth when he is alone, his intimate conversation with himself changes. He begins to love himself in a holy manner, not for himself but for God, and to love his own for God; he begins to understand that he must pardon his enemies and love them, and to wish eternal life for them as he does for himself. Often, however, the intimate conversation of a man in the state of grace continues to be tainted with egoism, self-love, sensuality, and pride. These sins are no longer mortal in him, they are venial; but if they are repeated, they incline him to fall into a serious sin, that is, to fall back into spiritual death. Should this happen, this man tends again to flee from himself because what he finds

[1] See IIa IIae, q.25, a.7: Whether Sinners Love Themselves. "Since the wicked do not know themselves aright, they do not love themselves aright, but love what they think themselves to be. But rhe good know themselves truly, and therefore truly love themselves . . . as to the inward man . . . and they take pleasure in entering into their own hearts. . . . On the other hand, the wicked have no wish to be preserved in the integrity of the inward man, nor do they desire spiritual goods for him, nor do they work for that end, nor do they take pleasure in their own company by entering into their own hearts, because whatever they find there, present, past, and future, is evil and horrible; nor do they agree with themselves, on account of the gnawings of conscience."

in himself is no longer life but death. Instead of making a salutary reflection on this subject, he may hurl himself back farther into death by casting himself into pleasure, into the satisfactions of sensuality or of pride.

In a man's hours of solitude, this intimate conversation begins again in spite of everything, as if to prove to him that it cannot stop. He would like to interrupt it, yet he cannot do so. The center of the soul has an irrestrainable need which demands satisfaction. In reality, God alone can answer this need, and the only solution is straightway to take the road leading to Him. The soul must converse with someone other than itself. Why? Because it is not its own last end; because its end is the living God, and it cannot rest entirely except in Him. As St. Augustine puts it: "Our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." [2]

Interior Conversation with God

The interior life is precisely an elevation and a transformation of the intimate conversation that everyone has with himself as soon as it tends to become a conversation with God.

St. Paul says: "For what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God." [3]

The Spirit of God progressively manifests to souls of good will what God desires of them and what He wishes to give them. May we receive with docility all that God wishes to give us! Our Lord says to those who seek Him: "Thou wouldst not seek Me if thou hadst not already found Me."

This progressive manifestation of God to the soul that seeks Him is not unaccompanied by a struggle; the soul must free itself from the bonds which are the results of sin, and gradually there disappears what St. Paul calls "the old man" and there takes shape "the new man."

[2] *The Confessions,* Bk. I, chap. i. "Our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." This is the proof for the existence of God through natural desire for true and lasting happiness, which can be found only in the Sovereign Good, known at least imperfectly and loved above all, and more than ourselves. We develop this proof in *La Providence et la confiance en Dieu,* pp. 50-64.

[3] See I Cor. 2:11.

He writes to the Romans: "I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind." [4]

What St. Paul calls "the inward man" is what is primary and most elevated in us: reason illumined by faith and the will, which should dominate the sensibility, common to man and animals.

St. Paul also says: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." [5] His spiritual youth is continually renewed, like that of the eagle, by the graces which he receives daily. This is so true that the priest who ascends the altar can always say, though he be ninety years old: "I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth." [6]

St. Paul insists on this thought in his epistle to the Colossians: "Lie not one to another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him, where there is neither Gentile nor Jew . . . nor barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all and in all." [7] The inward man is renewed unceasingly in the image of God, who does not grow old. The life of God is above the past, the present, and the future; it is measured by the single instant of immobile eternity. Likewise the risen Christ dies no more and possesses eternal youth. Now He vivifies us by ever new graces that He may render us like Himself. St. Paul wrote in a similar strain to the Ephesians: "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that Fie would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." [8]

4 Rom. 7:21-23.
5 See II Cor. 4:16.
6 Ps. 42:4.
7 Col. 3:9-11.
8 Eph. 3:14-19.

St. Paul clearly depicts in these lines the interior life in its depth, that life which tends constantly toward the contemplation of the mystery of God and lives by it in an increasingly closer union with Him. Pie wrote this letter not for some privileged souls alone, but to all the Christians of Ephesus as well as those of Corinth.

Furthermore, St. Paul adds: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth. . . . And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." [9]

In the light of these inspired words, which recall all that Jesus promised us in the beatitudes and all that He gave us in dying for us, we can define the interior life as follows: It is a supernatural life which, by a true spirit of abnegation and prayer, makes us tend to union with God and leads us to it.

It implies one phase in which purification dominates, another of progressive illumination in view of union with God, as all tradition teaches, thus making a distinction between the purgative way of beginners, the illuminative way of proficients, and the unitive way of the perfect.

The interior life thus becomes more and more a conversation with God, in which man gradually frees himself from egoism, self-love, sensuality, and pride, and in which, by frequent prayer, he asks the Lord for the ever new graces that he needs.[10]

As a result, man begins to know experimentally no longer only the inferior part of his being, but also the highest part. Above all, he begins to know God in a vital manner; he begins to have experience of the things of God. Little by little the thought of his own ego, toward which he made everything converge, gives place to the habitual thought of God; and egotistical love of self and of what is less good in him also gives place progressively to the love

[9] *Ibid.,* 4:23 f.; 5:2.

[10] The author of *The Imitation of Christ,* beginning with the first chapter of Book I, explains well the nature of the interior life when he says: "The teaching of Christ surpassed! all the teachings of the saints; and he that hath His Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna. But it happeneth that many, from the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little emotion, because they have not the Spirit of Christ. But he that would fully and with relish understand the words of Christ must study to conform his whole life to His."

of God and of souls in God. His interior conversation changes so much that St. Paul can say: "Our conversation is in heaven." [11] St. Thomas often insisted on this point.[12]

Therefore the interior life is in a soul that is in the state of grace, especially a life of humility, abnegation, faith, hope, and charity, with the peace given by the progressive subordination of our feelings and wishes to the love of God, who will be the object of our beatitude.

Hence, to have an interior life, an exceedingly active exterior apostolate does not suffice, nor does great theological knowledge. Nor is the latter necessary. A generous beginner, who already has a genuine spirit of abnegation and prayer, already possesses a true interior life which ought to continue developing.

In this interior conversation with God, which tends to become continual, the soul speaks by prayer, *oratio,* which is speech in its most excellent form. Such speech would exist if God had created only a single soul or one angel; for this creature, endowed with intellect and love, would speak with its Creator. Prayer takes the form now of petition, now of adoration and thanksgiving; it is always an elevation of the soul toward God. And God answers by recalling to our minds what has been said to us in the Gospel and what is useful for the sanctification of the present moment. Did not Christ say: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you"? [13]

[11] Phil. 3:20.

[12] He does so in particular in two important chapters of the *Contra Gentes* (IV, 21, 22) on the effects and the signs of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in us.

At the beginning of chapter 22 he writes: "To converse with one's friend is the highest characteristic of friendship. Moreover, man's conversation with God is by contemplation of Him, as the Apostle used to say: Our conversation is in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). Therefore, because the Holy Spirit makes us lovers of God, it follows that by the Holy Spirit we are constituted contemplatore of God: whence the Apostle says: 'But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord' " (II Cor. 3:18).

Those who meditate on chapters 21 and 22 of Book IV of the *Contra Gentes* will be able to get a clear idea as to whether or not, in the opinion of St. Thomas, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is in the normal way of sanctity.

[13] John 14:26.

Man thus becomes more and more the child of God; he recognizes more profoundly that God is his Father, and he even becomes more and more a little child in his relations with God. He understands what Christ meant when He told Nicodemus that a man must return to the bosom of God that he may be spiritually reborn, and each day more intimately so, by that spiritual birth which is a remote similitude of the eternal birth of the Word.[14] The saints truly follow this way, and then between their souls and God is established that conversation which does not, so to speak, cease. Thus it was said that St. Dominic knew how to speak only of God or with God; this is what made it possible for him to be always charitable toward men and at the same time prudent, strong, and just.

This conversation with God is established through the influence of Christ, our Mediator, as the liturgy often says, particularly in the hymn *Jesu dulcis memoria,* which is a splendid expression of the Christian's interior life:

Jesu, spes poenitentibus,
Quam pius es petentibus!
Quam bonus te quaerentibus!
Sed quid invenientibus!
Nec lingua valet dicere,
Nec littera exprimere,
Expertus potest credere
Quid sit Jesum diligere.

Let us strive to be of the number of those who seek Him, and to whom it is said: "Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not already found Me."

[14] St. Francis de Sales remarks somewhere in his writings that on the one hand as a man grows up he should be self-sufficient and depend less and less on his mother, who becomes less necessary to him when he reaches manhood, and especially when he reaches full maturity; on the contrary, as the interior man grows, he becomes daily more aware of his divine sonship, which makes him the child of God, and he becomes more and more a child in regard to God, even to the extent of re-entering, so to speak, the bosom of God. The blessed in heaven are always in this bosom of God.

CHAPTER III

The Spiritual Organism

THE interior life, which presupposes the state of grace, consists, as wc have seen, in a generous tendency of the soul toward God, in which little by little each one's intimate conversation with himself is elevated, is transformed, and becomes an intimate conversation of the soul with God. It is, we said, eternal life begun in the obscurity of faith before reaching its full development in the clarity of that vision which cannot be lost.

Better to comprehend what this seed of eternal life, *semen gloriae,* is in us, we must ponder the fact that from sanctifying grace spring forth in our faculties the infused virtues, both theological and moral, and also the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; virtues and gifts which are like the subordinated functions of one and the same organism, a spiritual organism, which ought to develop until our entrance into heaven.

ARTICLE I

The Natural Life and the Supernatural Life of the Soul

We must distinguish clearly in our soul what belongs to its very nature and what is an entirely gratuitous gift of God. The same distinction must be made for the angels who also have a nature which, though entirely spiritual, is very inferior to the gift of grace.

If we carefully consider the human soul in its nature, we see two quite different regions in it: one belongs to the sensible order, the other to the suprasensible or intellectual order. The sensitive part of the soul is that which is common to men and animals; it includes the external senses and the internal senses, comprising the imagination, the sensible memory, and also sensibility, or the sensitive

appetite, whence spring the various passions or emotions, which we call sensible love and hatred, desire and aversion, sensible joy and sadness, hope and despair, audacity and fear, and anger. All this sensitive life exists in the animal, whether its passions are mild like those of the dove or lamb, or whether they are strong like those of the wolf and the lion.

Above this sensitive part common to men and animals, our nature likewise possesses an intellectual part, which is common to men and angels, although it is far more vigorous and beautiful in the angel. By this intellectual part our soul towers above our body; this is why we say that the soul is spiritual, that it does not intrinsically depend on the body and will thus be able to survive the body after death.

From the essence of the soul in this elevated region spring our two higher faculties, the intellect and the will.[1] The intellect knows not only sensible qualities, colors, and sounds, but also being, the intelligible reality, of necessary and universal truths, such as the following: "Nothing happens without a cause, and, in the last analysis, without a supreme cause. We must do good and avoid evil. Do what you ought to, come what may." An animal will never attain to the knowledge of these principles; even if its imagination were continually growing in perfection, it would never attain to the intellectual order of necessary and universal truths. Its imagination does not pass beyond the order of sensible qualities, known here or there in their contingent singularity.

Since the intellect knows the good in a universal manner, and not only the delectable or useful good but the upright and reasonable good (for example: Die rather than become a traitor), it follows that the will can love this good, will it, and accomplish it. Thereby the intellect immensely dominates the sensitive part or the emotions common to men and animals. By his intellect and his will, man re-

[1] To know and to will, the human soul and the angel need two faculties; in this respect both differ from God. God, who is Being itself. Thought, Wisdom, and Love, does not need faculties to know and to love. On the contrary, since the angel and the soul are not being itself, they have only a nature or an essence capable of receiving existence. Moreover, in them restricted existence, which is proper to them, is distinct from acts of knowledge and of will which have an object that is not limited; as a result the essence of the soul or of the angel, which receives the existence that is proper to them, is distinct from the faculties or powers capable of producing, not the permanent act of existence, but the successive acts of knowledge and of will. Cf. St. Thomas, Ia, q.54, a. 1-3.

semblés the angel; although his intellect, in contrast to the angelic intellect, depends in this present life on the senses, which propose to it the first objects that it knows.

The two higher faculties, the intellect and the will, can develop greatly as we see in men of genius and superior men of action. These faculties could, however, develop forever without ever knowing and loving the intimate life of God, which is of another order, entirely supernatural, and supernatural alike for angels and men. Man and the angel can indeed know God naturally from without, by the reflection of His perfections in creatures; but no created and creatable intellect can by its natural powers attain, even confusedly and obscurely, the essential and formal object of the divine intellect.[2] To hold that it could be done would be to maintain that this created intellect is of the same nature as God, since it would be specified by the same formal object.[3] As St. Paul says: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God." [4] This order is essentially supernatural.

Sanctifying grace, the seed of glory, introduces us into this higher order of truth and life. It is an essentially supernatural life, a participation in the intimate life of God, in the divine nature, since it even now prepares us to see God some day as He sees Himself and to love Him as He loves Himself. St. Paul has declared to us: "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." [5]

Sanctifying grace, which makes us begin to live in this higher, supra-angelic order of the intimate life of God, is like a divine graft received in the very essence of the soul to elevate its vitality and to make it bear no longer merely natural fruits but supernatural ones, meritorious acts that merit eternal life for us.

This divine graft of sanctifying grace is, therefore, in us an

2 Thus a peasant who only very confusedly grasps intelligible reality, which is the object of philosophy, has, nevertheless, an intellect of the same nature as that of the philosopher; but neither one nor the other can by the sole natural powers of his reason know the intimate life of God.

8 *Suvnna,* la, q. 12, a.4.

4 See I Cor. 2:11.

"*Ibid.,* 2:9 f.

essentially supernatural life, immensely superior to a sensible miracle and above the natural life of our spiritual and immortal soul.®

Even now this life of grace develops in us under the form of the infused virtues and of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. As in the natural order, our intellectual and sensitive faculties spring from the very essence of our soul, so in the supernatural order, from sanctifying grace, received in the essence of the soul, spring, in our superior and inferior faculties, the infused virtues and the gifts which constitute, with the root from which they proceed, our spiritual or supernatural organism.7 It was given to us in baptism, and is restored to us by absolution if we have the misfortune to lose it.

The spiritual organism may be expressed in the following table of the virtues and the gifts.

theological	charity	gift of wisdom
	faith	gift of understanding
	hope	gift of knowledge
moral	prudence	gift of counsel
	justice	
	religion	gift of piety
	penance	
	obedience	
	fortitude	gift of fortitude
	patience	
	temperance	gift of fear
	humility	
	meekness	
	chastity	

In connection with this table it would be well to consult St. Thomas' treatise on each of the virtues, where he speaks of the

0 The sensible miracle of the resurrection of a body restores natural life to this body in a supernatural manner; whereas sanctifying grace, which resuscitates a soul, is an essentially supernatural life. The miraculous effect of the corporal resurrection is not supernatural in itself but only by the mode of its production, "non quoad essentiam, sed quoad modum productionis suae." This is why a miracle, although supernatural by reason of its cause, is naturally knowable, whereas the essentially supernatural life of grace could not be known naturally. To mark this difference a miracle is often said to be preternatural rather than supernatural, and the latter word is reserved to designate the supernatural life.

' Sec la llae, q.63, a.3.

corresponding gift.[8] The gift of fear corresponds both to temperance and to hope,[9] but this latter virtue is also aided by the gift of knowledge, which shows us the emptiness of created things and thereby makes us desire God and depend on Him.[10]

ARTICLE II

The Theological Virtues

The theological virtues are infused virtues which have for their object God Himself, our supernatural last end. This is why they are called theological. By contrast, the moral virtues have for their object the supernatural means proportioned to our last end. Thus prudence directs our acts to this end; religion makes us render to God the worship that is due Him; justice makes us give to everyone what we owe him; fortitude and temperance regulate the sensible part of our soul to prevent it from going astray and to make it cooperate, according to its manner, in our progress toward God.[1]

Among the theological virtues, infused faith, which makes us believe all that God has revealed because He is Truth itself, is like a higher spiritual sense which allows us to hear a divine harmony that is inaccessible to every other means of knowing. Infused faith is like a higher sense of hearing for the audition of a spiritual symphony which has God for its composer. This explains why there is an immense difference between the purely historical study of the Gospel and of the miracles which confirm it and the supernatural act of faith by which we believe in the Gospel as in the word of God. A very learned man who seeks the truth sincerely can make a historical and critical study of the Gospel and of the miracles which confirm it without as yet coming to the point where he believes. He will believe supernaturally only after receiving the grace of faith, which will introduce him into a higher world, superior even to the natural life of the angels. "Faith ... is the gift

8 *Summa,* IIa IIae.

9 See *ibid.,* q. 141, a. 1 ad jum: "Temperance also has a corresponding gift, namely, fear, whereby man is withheld from the pleasures of the flesh, according to Ps. 118:120: 'Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear? ... It also corresponds to the virtue of hope."

10 Sec *ibid.,* q.9, a. 4.

1 See la IIae, q.6i, a. 1 f.

of God," says St. Paul.[2] It is the basis of justification, for it makes us know the supernatural end toward which we must tend.[3] The Church has defined against the Semi-Pelagians that even the beginning of faith is a gift of grace.[4] All the great theologians have shown that infused faith is essentially supernatural, of a supernatural character very superior to that of the sensible miracle and also to that of prophecy which announces a contingent future in the natural order, such as the end of a war.[5] Faith makes us, in fact, adhere supernaturally and infallibly to what God reveals to us about His intimate life, according as the Church, which is charged with preserving revelation, proposes it to us.

Infused faith belongs thus to an order immensely superior to the historical and critical study of the Gospel. As Lacordaire rightly says: "A scholar may study Catholic doctrine, not reject it bitterly, and may even say repeatedly: 'You are blessed to have faith; I should like to have it, but I cannot believe.' And he tells the truth: he wishes and he cannot (as yet), for study and good faith do not always conquer the truth, so that it may be clear that rational certitude is not the first certitude on which Catholic doctrine rests. This scholar therefore knows Catholic doctrine; he admits its facts; he feels its power; he agrees that there existed a man named Jesus Christ, who lived and died in a prodigious manner. He is touched by the blood of the martyrs, by the constitution of the Church; he will willingly say that it is the greatest phenomenon that has passed over the world. He will almost say that it is true. And yet he does not

2 Eph. 2:8.

3 Rom. 4:1-25. Abraham was justified by faith in God, "it was reputed to him unto justice." We ourselves will obtain salvation only by faith, which is a gift of God, by faith in Jesus Christ.

4 Cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 178.

6 St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.6, a. 1, 2. As the virtues arc specified by their object and their formal motive, this essentially supernatural character of infused faith depends on its first object and on its formal motive, which are inaccessible to all natural knowledge. The first object of faith is, in fact, God Himself in His intimate life, and the formal motive of infused faith is the authority of God revealing. Now we can by reason alone know the authority of God the Author of nature, and even the Author of the sensible miracle; but we cannot by reason alone adhere to the authority of God the Author of grace. It is as the Author of grace that God intervenes when He reveals to us rhe essentially supernatural mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist, and eternal life. We have treated this important point at length in *De revelatione,* 1, chap. 14, pp. 458-514, and in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 61-80.

conclude; he feels himself oppressed by truth, as one is in a dream where one sees without seeing. The day comes, however, when this scholar drops on his knees; feeling the wretchedness of man, he lifts his hands to heaven and exclaims: Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord!' At this moment something takes place in him, scales drop from his eyes, a mystery is accomplished, and he is changed. He is a man, meek and humble of heart; he can die, he has conquered the truth." [6]

If acquired faith, born of the historical examination of the Gospel and of the miracles which confirm it, were sufficient to attain the formal motive of Christian faith, infused faith would be useless, as would likewise infused hope and infused charity. Natural good will, spoken of by the Pelagians, would suffice. In the opinion of the Pelagians, grace and the infused virtues were not absolutely necessary for salvation, but only for the easier accomplishment of the acts of Christian life.[7]

Infused faith is like a faculty of supernatural audition, like a higher musical sense, which permits us to hear the spiritual harmonies of the kingdom of heaven, to hear, in a way, the voice of God through the prophets and His Son before we are admitted to see Him face to face. Between the unbeliever, who studies the Gospel, and the believer, there is a difference similar to that which exists between two persons who are listening to a Beethoven symphony, one of whom has a musical ear and the other has not. Both hear all the notes of the symphony, but one alone grasps its meaning and its soul. Similarly, only the believer adheres supernaturally to the Gospel as to the supernatural word of God; and he adheres to it even though untutored, while the learned man with all his means of criticism cannot, without infused faith, adhere to it in this manner. "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the testimony of God in himself." [8]

This is what prompted Lacordaire to say: "What takes place in us when we believe is a phenomenon of intimate and superhuman light. I do not say that exterior things do not act on us as rational

6 H. Lacordaire, *Conferences à Notre-Dame de Paris,* 17th conference.

7 Cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 179. Acquired faith exists in the demons who have lost infused faith, but who believe as it were reluctantly because of the evidence of miracles and other signs of revelation. Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q.j, a. 2; *De veritate,* q. 14, a. 9 ad 4U111.

8 See I John 5:10.

motives of certitude; but the very act of this supreme certitude, which I speak of, affects us directly like a luminous phenomenon (infused light of faith); I would even add, like a transluminous phenomenon. . . . We are affected by a transluminous light. . . . Otherwise how could there be proportion between our adherence, which would be natural and rational, and an object that surpasses nature and reason? . . . [9] Similarly sympathetic intuition between two men accomplishes in a single moment what logic could not have brought about in many years. Just so, a sudden illumination sometimes enlightens the genius.

"A convert will tell you: 'I read, reasoned, wished, and I did not arrive. Then one day, I don't know how, on the street corner or at my fireside, I don't know, but I was no longer the same; I believed. . . . What took place in me at the moment of final conviction is of a totally different nature from what preceded. Remember the two disciples who were going to Emmaus.' " [10]

Fifty years ago, a man who did not yet know radio would have been surprised to hear it said that the day would come when a symphony that was being played in Vienna could be heard in Rome. By infused faith we hear a spiritual symphony which originates in heaven. The perfect chords of this symphony are called the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the redemption, the Mass, and eternal life. By this superior sense of hearing man is guided toward eternity; he ought ever to advance toward the summit from which this harmony comes.

To tend effectively toward this supernatural end and to reach it, man has received two helps, hope and charity, which are like two wings. Without them he could make progress only in the direction indicated by reason; with them he flies in the direction pointed out by faith.

Just as our intellect cannot know our supernatural end without

"St. Thomas says the same thing in *De veritate,* q. 14, a.2: "Eternal life consists in the full knowledge of God. Hence there should be in us some beginning of this supernatural knowledge; and this is through faith, which from an infused light believes things that exceed natural reason."

Summa, IIa IIae, q.6, a. 1, 2: Doubtless the light of faith is still obscure, but it is transluminiously obscure, that is, superior and not inferior to the evidences of reason.

[10] Lacordaire, *loc. cit.*

the infused light of faith, so our will cannot tend toward it unless its powers are augmented, increased more than tenfold, raised to a higher order. For this the will needs a supernatural love and a new impulse.

By hope we desire to possess God, and in order to attain Him we rely, not on our natural powers but on the help that He promised us. We rely on God Himself who always comes to the assistance of those who invoke Him.

Charity is a superior and more disinterested love of God. It makes us love God, not only in order to possess Him some day, but for Himself and more than ourselves, because of His infinite goodness, which is more lovable in itself than all the benefits we receive from it.[11] This virtue makes us love God above all else as a friend who has first loved us. It ordains to Him the acts of all the other virtues, which it vivifies and renders meritorious. Charity is our great supernatural force, the power of love which through centuries of persecution has surmounted all obstacles, even in weak children, such as St. Agnes and St. Lucy.

A man illumined by faith thus advances toward God by the two wings of hope and love. As soon as he sins mortally, however, he loses sanctifying grace and charity, since he turns away from God, whom he ceases to love more than himself. But divine mercy preserves infused faith and infused hope in him as long as he does not sin mortally against these virtues. He still preserves the light which indicates the road to be followed and he can still entrust himself to infinite mercy in order to ask of it the grace of conversion.

Of these three theological virtues, charity is the highest, and together with sanctifying grace, it ought to endure forever. "Charity," says St. Paul, "never falleth away. . . . Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." [12] It will last forever, eternally, when faith will have disappeared to give place to vision, and when hope will be succeeded by the inamissible possession of God clearly known.

Such are the superior functions of the spiritual organism: the three theological virtues which grow together, and with them the infused moral virtues that accompany them.

11 Sec Ia IIae, 11.4.
12 Sec I Cor. 13:8, 13.

ARTICLE III

The Moral Virtues

To understand what the action of the spiritual organism should be, we must clearly distinguish on the level below the theological virtues, the acquired moral virtues which were described by the moralists of pagan antiquity and which can exist without the state of grace, and the infused moral virtues which were unknown to pagan moralists and which are described in the Gospel. The acquired moral virtues, as their name indicates, are acquired by the repetition of acts under the direction of more or less cultivated natural reason. The infused moral virtues are called infused because God alone can produce them in us. They are not the result of the repetition of our acts; we received them in baptism as parts of our spiritual organism, and absolution restores them to us if we have had the misfortune to lose them. The acquired moral virtues, known by the pagans, have an object accessible to natural reason; the infused moral virtues have an essentially supernatural object commensurate with our supernatural end, an object which would be inaccessible without the infused light of faith in eternal life, in the gravity of sin, in the redemptive value of our Savior's passion, in the value of grace and of the sacraments.[1]

In relation to the interior life, we shall discuss first of all the acquired moral virtues, then the infused moral virtues, and finally the relationship of the first to the second. This subject matter is important, especially since some souls consecrated to God do not in their youth give sufficient importance to the moral virtues. Over and above a rather calm and pure sensibility, they seem to have the three theological virtues, but they almost lack the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and so on.[2] Something like an intermediary stage seems to be lacking in their souls. Yet they have the infused inoral virtues, but not the corresponding acquired moral virtues in a sufficient degree. Others, on the contrary, who are older and have seen the importance of the moral virtues of prudence,

1 See la Ilae, q.63, a.4.

2 Nevcrrhcless these persons, being in the state of grace, do have the infused moral virtues always united to charity, but their attention is not sufficiently focused on them, and they have the corresponding acquired virtues only in a feeble degree.

justice, fortitude, and so on, in social life, do not sufficiently value the theological virtues, which are, however, incomparably higher since they unite us to God.

THE ACQUIRED MORAL VIRTUES

We shall ascend progressively from the lower degrees of natural morality to those of supernatural morality. We must, first of all, observe with St. Thomas that in a man in the state of mortal sin there are often false virtues, such as the temperance of the miser. He practices it, not for love of honest and reasonable good, not for the sake of living according to right reason, but for love of that useful good, money. Similarly, if he pays his debts, it is rather to avoid the costs of a lawsuit than for love of justice.

Above these false virtues, true acquired moral virtues may exist even in a man in the state of mortal sin. Some practice sobriety in order to live reasonably; for the same motive they pay their debts and teach some good principles to their children. But as long as a man remains in the state of mortal sin these true virtues remain in the state of a somewhat unstable disposition *(in statu dispositionis facile mobilis)·,* they are not yet in the state of solid virtue *(difficile mobilis).* Why is this? The answer is that, as long as a man is in the state of mortal sin, his will is habitually turned away from God. Instead of loving Him above all else, the sinner loves himself more than God, with the consequent result that he shows great weakness in accomplishing moral good, even of the natural order.

Moreover, the true acquired virtues which are in a man in the state of mortal sin lack solidity because they are not connected, because they are not sufficiently supported by the closely related moral virtues that are often lacking. We may take as an example a soldier who is naturally inclined to acts of bravery and has often shown himself courageous, but who is also inclined to become intoxicated. It may happen that, by reason of intemperance, on certain days he fails in the acquired virtue of fortitude and neglects his essential duties as a soldier.[3] This man, who is inclined by temperament to

[8] See la Ilae, q.65, a. 2. Thomists generally admit this proposition: "Without charity there can be true acquired moral virtues, but imperfect ones, as there were actually in many peoples." Cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theol.,* De proprietate virtutum, disp. XVII, a. 2, nos. *6,* 8, 10, 11, 14. Sahnanticcnscs.

be courageous, has not the virtue of fortitude as a virtue. Intemperance makes him fail in prudence, even in the domain of the virtue of fortitude. Prudence, which ought to direct all the moral virtues, supposes in fact that our will and our sensible appetites are habitually rectified as regards the end of these virtues. A man who drives several horses hitched to a chariot must see to it that each animal is already broken and docile. Now prudence is like the driver of all the moral virtues, *auriga virtutum,* and it ought to have them all in hand, so to speak. One does not go without the other: they are connected in prudence, which directs them.

Therefore, that true acquired virtues may not be simply in a state of unstable disposition, and that they may be in a state of solid virtue (m *statu virtutis},* they must be connected. That this may be so, a man must no longer be in the state of mortal sin, but his will must be set straight in regard to his last end. He must love God more than himself, at least with a real and efficacious love of esteem, if not with a love that is felt. This love is impossible without the state of grace and without charity.[4] But after justification or conversion, these true acquired virtues may come to be stable virtues; they may become connected, relying on each other. Finally, under the influx of infused charity, they become the principle of acts meritorious of eternal life. For this reason, some theologians, such as Duns Scotus, have even thought it not necessary that we should have infused moral virtues.

THE INFUSED MORAL VIRTUES

Are the acquired moral virtues we have just spoken of sufficient, under the influence of charity, to constitute the spiritual organism of the virtues in a Christian? Must we receive infused moral virtues?

Cursus theol., De virtutibus, disp. IV, dub. i, no. i; dub. 2, nos. 26, 27. Billuart, *Cursus theol.,* De passionibus et virtutibus, diss. II, a. 4, par. 3, especially *in fine.*

We treated this subject at greater length in the *Revue Thomiste,* July, 1937: "The instability of the acquired moral virtues in the state of mortal sin." Consult in particular St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.49, a. 2 ad 3 um; this text is of primary importance.

[F] See la Ilae, q.6j, a. 2. In the present state of humanity, every man is either in the state of mortal sin or in the state of grace. Since the Fall, man cannot, in fact, efficaciously love God the Author of his nature more than himself without healing grace, a grace which is not really distinct from sanctifying grace which elevates. Cf. St. Thomas, la ilae, q. 109, a. 3.

In conformity with tradition and with a decision of Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne,[5] the Catechism of the Council of Trent (Part II, On baptism and its effects), answers: "The grace (sanctifying), which baptism confers, is accompanied by the glorious cortege of all the virtues, which, by a special gift of God, penetrate the soul simultaneously with it." This gift is an admirable effect of the Savior's passion which is applied to us by the sacrament of regeneration.

Moreover, in this bestowal of the infused moral virtues, there is a lofty fitness that has been well set forth by St. Thomas.[6] The means, he observes, must be proportioned to the end. By the infused theological virtues we are raised and directed toward the supernatural last end. Hence it is highly fitting that we should be raised and directed by the infused moral virtues in regard to supernatural means capable of leading us to our supernatural end.

God provides for our needs not less in the order of grace than in that of nature. Therefore, since in the order of nature He has given us the capacity to succeed in practicing the acquired moral virtues, it is highly fitting that in the order of grace He should give us infused moral virtues.

The acquired moral virtues do not suffice in a Christian to make him will, as he ought, the supernatural means ordained to eternal life. St. Thomas says, in fact, that there is an essential difference between the acquired temperance described by pagan moralists, and the Christian temperance spoken of in the Gospel.[7] The difference is analogous to that of an octave between two musical notes of the same name, separated by a complete scale. We often distinguish between philosophical temperance and Christian temperance, or again

5 Clement V at the Council of Vienne (Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 483), thus settled this question, which was formulated under Innocent III (Denzinger, no. 410): "Whether faith, charity, and the other virtues are infused into children in baptism." He answers: "We, however, considering the general efficacy of the death of Christ, which is applied by baptism equally to all the baptized, think that, with the approval of the sacred Council, we should choose as more probable and more consonant and harmonious with the teachings of the saints and of modern doctors of theology, the second opinion, which declares that informing grace and the virtues arc bestowed in baptism on infants as well as adults." By these words, "and the virtues," Clement V means not only rhe theological virtues, but the moral virtues, for they also were involved in the question formulated under Innocent III.

6 Sec la Ilae, q.63, a. j.

7 *Ihid.,* a. 4.

between the philosophical poverty of Crates and the evangelical poverty of the disciples of Christ.

As St. Thomas remarks,[8] acquired temperance has a rule and formal object different from those of infused temperance. Acquired temperance keeps a just medium in the matter of food in order that we may live reasonably, that we may not injure our health or the exercise of our reason. Infused temperance, on the contrary, keeps a superior happy mean in the use of food in order that we may live in a Christian manner, as children of God, en route to the wholly supernatural life of eternity. Infused temperance thus implies a more severe mortification than is implied by acquired temperance; it requires, as St. Paul says, that man chastise his body and bring it into subjection,[9] that he may become not only a virtuous citizen of society on earth, but one of the "fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God." [10]

The same difference exists between the acquired virtue of religion, which ought to render to God, the Author of nature, the worship due Him, and the infused virtue of religion, which offers to God, the Author of grace, the essentially supernatural sacrifice of the Mass, which perpetuates in substance that of the cross. Between these two virtues of the same name, there is even more than the difference of an octave; there is a difference of orders, so that the acquired virtue of religion or that of temperance could grow forever by the repetition of acts without ever attaining the dignity of the slightest degree of the infused virtue of the same name. The tonality is entirely different; the spirit animating the word is no longer the same. In the case of the acquired virtue, the spirit is simply that of right reason; in the infused virtue, the spirit is that of faith which comes from God through grace.

These two formal objects and two motives of action differ greatly. Acquired prudence is ignorant of the supernatural motives of action; infused prudence knows them. Proceeding not from reason alone, but from reason illumined by infused faith, it knows the infinite elevation of our supernatural last end, God seen face to face. It knows, consequently, the gravity of mortal sin, the value of sanctifying grace and of the actual graces we must ask for every day

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Sec I Cor. 9:27.
[10] Eph. 2:19.

in order to persevere, and the value of the sacraments that are to be received. Acquired prudence is ignorant of all of this, because this matter belongs to an essentially supernatural order.

What a difference there is between the philosophical modesty described by Aristotle and Christian humility! The latter presupposes the knowledge of two dogmas: that of creation *ex nihilo,* and that of the necessity of actual grace for taking the slightest step forward in the way of salvation. What a distance there is also between the virginity of the vestal virgin, whose duty it was to keep up the sacred fire, and that of the Christian virgin who consecrates her body and heart to God that she may follow our Lord Jesus Christ more perfectly!

These infused moral virtues are Christian prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, and those which accompany them, such as meekness and humility. They are connected with charity in this sense, that charity, which sets us aright in regard to our supernatural last end, cannot exist without them, without this multiple rectification in regard to the supernatural means of salvation.[11] Moreover, he who loses charity by a mortal sin, loses the infused moral virtues; because, by turning away from the supernatural end, he loses infused rectification in regard to the means proportioned to this end. But it does not follow that he loses faith and hope, or that he loses the acquired virtues; the latter, however, cease to be stable and connected in him. In fact, a man who is in the state of mortal sin loves himself more than he does God and tends through egoism to fail in his duties even in the natural order.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE INFUSED MORAL VIRTUES AND THE ACQUIRED MORAL VIRTUES

The relations between these virtues and their subordination are explained by what we have just said.[12] First of all, the facility of virtuous acts is not assured in the same way by the infused moral virtues as by the acquired moral virtues. The infused virtues give an intrinsic facility, without always excluding the extrinsic obstacles;

[11] See Ia IIae, q.65, a. 3.

[12] Cf. St. Thomas, *Quaest. disp.i* De virtutibus in communi, a. 10, in corp., ad 1um, ad 2um, ad 3um, ad 4um; also P. Bernard, O.P., *La vie spirituelle,* January, 1935; suppl., pp. 25-54: "La vertu acquise et la vertu infuse."

whereas these extrinsic obstacles are excluded by the repetition of acts that engender the acquired virtues.

This is easily understood when by sacramental absolution the infused moral virtues, united to sanctifying grace and to charity, are restored to a penitent who, though he has imperfect contrition for his sins, has not the acquired moral virtues. This happens, for example, in the case of a man who is accustomed to becoming intoxicated and who makes his Easter confession with sufficient attrition. By absolution he receives, together with charity, the infused moral virtues, including temperance; but he has not yet the acquired virtue of temperance. The infused virtue that he receives gives him a certain intrinsic facility for the exercise of the obligatory acts of sobriety; but this infused virtue does not exclude the extrinsic obstacles which would be eliminated by the repetition of the acts that engender acquired temperance.[13] This penitent ought also to watch seriously over himself in order to avoid the occasions that would cause him to fall back into his habitual sin. For this reason it is evident that the acquired virtue of temperance greatly facilitates the exercise of the infused virtue of the same name.[14]

How are the virtues exercised? They are exercised simultaneously in such a way that the acquired virtue is subordinated to the infused virtue as a favorable disposition. Thus, in another domain, the agility of a pianist's or a harpist's fingers, which is acquired by a repetition of acts, favors the exercise of the musical art that is in the artist's intellect and not in his fingers. If he completely loses the nimbleness of his fingers as a result of paralysis, he can no longer exercise his art because of an extrinsic obstacle. His art, however, remains in his practical intellect, as we see in the case of a musical

13 Hence it follows that this penitent has through experience a much greater knowledge of the obstacles to be conquered than of the infused virtue of temperance, which he has just received, and which is of too elevated an order to fall under the scope of sensible experience.

14 Infused temperance can exist without acquired temperance, as in the case we have just discussed. And inversely, acquired temperance can exist without the infused virtue, for the latter is lost after every mortal sin, whereas acquired temperance remains at least in an imperfect state *(in statu dispositionis facile inobilis)* if it existed before this sin. Thus the sensible memory, which is at the service of intellectual knowledge, can exist without it; inversely, a great scholar, preserving his knowledge in his intellect, can, by reason of a cerebral lesion, lose his memory which facilitated the exercise of this knowledge.

genius who is stricken with paralysis. Normally there ought to be two subordinated functions that should be exercised together. The same holds true for the acquired virtue and for the infused virtue of the same name.[15]* In like manner the imagination is at the service of the intellect, and the memory at that of knowledge.

These moral virtues consist in a happy mean between two extremes, shown by excess on the one hand and deficiency on the other. Thus the virtue of fortitude inclines us to keep a happy mean between fear, which flees danger without a reasonable motive, and temerity, which would lead us into the danger of getting our head broken without sufficient reason. However, this happy mean may be misunderstood. Epicureans and the tepid intend to keep a happy mean not for love of virtue, but for convenience' sake in order to flee from the discomforts of the contrary vices. They confuse the happy mean with mediocrity, which is found not precisely between two contrary evils, but halfway between good and evil. Mediocrity or tepidity flees the higher good as an extreme to be avoided. It hides its laziness under this principle: "The best is sometimes the enemy of the good"; and it ends by saying: "The best is often, if not always, the enemy of the good." It thus ends by confusing the good with the mediocre.

The right happy medium of true virtue is not only a mean between two contrary vices; it is also a summit. It rises like a culminating point between these contrary deviations; thus fortitude is superior to fear and temerity; true prudence to imprudence and cunning; magnanimity to pusillanimity and vain and ambitious presumption; liberality to avarice or stinginess and prodigality; true religion to impiety and superstition.

Moreover, this happy medium, which is at the same time a summit,

15 In the just man, charity commands or inspires the act of acquired temperance by the intermediary of the simultaneous act of infused temperance. And even outside the production of their acts, since these two virtues are united in the same faculty, the infused confirms the acquired. Only in those Christians who live a more supernatural life, does the supernatural motive most appear as the explicit motive of acting; in others it is a rational motive, and the supernatural remains somewhat latent *(remissus).* Similarly, one pianist may show great technique and a modicum of inspiration, whereas in another the inverse may be true. The motives of inferior reason, which touch on health, arc more or less explicit according as a person is more or less freed from these preoccupations, or according as he is so healthy that he need not think of his health.

tends to rise without deviating to the right or the left in proportion as virtue grows. In this sense the mean of the infused virtue is superior to that of the corresponding acquired virtue, for it depends on a higher rule and has in view a more elevated object.

We note, lastly, that spiritual authors insist particularly, as the Gospel does, on certain moral virtues which have a more special relation with God and an affinity with the theological virtues. They are religion or solid piety,[16] penance,[17] which render to God the worship and the reparation which are due to Him; meekness,[18] united to patience, perfect chastity, virginity,[19] and humility,[20] a fundamental virtue which excludes pride, the principle of every sin. By abasing us before God, humility raises us above pusillanimity and pride and prepares us for the contemplation of divine things, for union with God. "God giveth grace to the humble," [21] and He makes them humble in order to load them with His gifts. Christ delighted in saying: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." [22] He alone, who was so well established in truth, could speak of His humility without losing it.

Such are the infused and acquired moral virtues which, with the theological virtues to which they are subordinated, constitute our spiritual organism. This ensemble of functions possesses great harmony, although venial sin may more or less frequently introduce discordant notes in it. All the parts of this spiritual organism grow together, says St. Thomas, like the five fingers of one hand.[23] This proportionate growth demonstrates that a soul cannot have lofty charity without profound humility, just as the highest branch of a tree rises toward heaven in proportion as its roots plunge more deeply into the soil. We must take care in the interior life that nothing troubles the harmony of this spiritual organism, as happens un-

16 See IIa IIae, q.81.
17 Sec Illa, q.85.
18 See Ha llae, q. 157.
19 *Ibid.,* q. 151, 152.
20 *Ibid.,* q. 162.
21 Jas. 4:6.
22 Matt. 11:29.
23 See la Ilae, q.66, a. 2. These virtues grow together with charity because of their connection with this virtue, just as the different parts of our physical organism grow simultaneously. But the infused moral virtues grow especially with charity. The acquired virtues may not develop as much if they are not sufficiently exercised.

fortunately in those who, while perhaps remaining in the state of grace, seem more preoccupied with human learning or exterior relations than with growth in faith, confidence, and the love of God.

To form a right idea of the spiritual organism, it is not sufficient to know these virtues. We must consider the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and not ignore the diverse forms under which divine help is offered.

ARTICLE IV

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost

We shall recall what divine revelation, the traditional teaching of the Church, and the explanation of this teaching given by theologians, especially St. Thomas, teach us about the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

The revealed doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Ghost is contained principally in the classic text of Isaias (11:2) which the fathers have often commented upon, saying that it is applied first of all to the Messias, and then by participation to all the just, to whom Christ promised to send the Holy Ghost. In this text, Isaias says in reference to the Messias: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness, and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." [1]

In the Book of Wisdom we read also: "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones. . . . Silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty. . . . Now all good things came to me together with her. . . . I knew not that she was the mother

[1] The Hebrew text does not mention the gift of piety, but the Septuagint and the Vulgate do. Since the third century, tradition affirms this sevenfold number. Moreover, in the Hebrew text of Isaias, fear is named a second time in verse 3, and in the Old Testament the terms "fear of God" and "piety" have almost the same meaning.

of them all. Which I have learned without guile, and communicate without envy. . . . For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use, become the friends of God. . . . She reneweth all things, and through nations conveyeth herself into holy souls, she maketh the friends of God and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom." [2] This passage in itself shows that wisdom is the highest of the gifts of the Holy Ghost enumerated by Isaias.

This Old Testament revelation takes on its full meaning in the light of our Savior's words: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever. The spirit of truth . . . shall be in you. . . . The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [3] To fortify the faithful against the promoters of heresy, St. John adds: "But you have the unction from the Holy One. . . . Let the unction, which you have received from Him, abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you; but as His unction teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie." [4] Moreover, Scripture contains texts commonly quoted as relating to each gift in particular.[5]

TRADITION

In the course of time, the fathers of the Church often commented on these words of Scripture, and, beginning with the third century, tradition explicitly affirms that the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are in all the just.[0] Pope St. Damasus, in 382, speaks of the sevenfold Spirit which rested on the Messias, and he enumerates the gifts.[7]

St. Augustine, especially, explains this doctrine in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.[8] He shows the correspondence be-

[2] Wisd. 7:7-28.
[3] John 14:15-26.
[4] See I John 2:20, 27.
[5] St. Thomas quotes these texts when he treats of each of the seven gifts.
[6] A. Gardeil, O.P., "Dons du Saint-Esprit," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique,* IV, 1728-81.
[7] Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 83.
[8] *De sermone Domini,* I, 1-4; *De doctrina Christiana,* II, 7; *Sermo* 347.

tween the evangelical beatitudes and the seven gifts. Fear represents the first degree of the spiritual life; wisdom is its crown. Between these two extremes, St. Augustine distinguishes a double period of purifying preparation for wisdom: a remote preparation, by the active practice of the moral virtues corresponding to the gifts of piety, fortitude, knowledge, and counsel; then an immediate preparation, in which the soul is purified as a result of a more enlightened faith by the gift of understanding, of a firmer hope sustained by the gift of fortitude, and of a more ardent charity. The first preparation is called the active life; the second, the contemplative life,[9] because moral activity is here entirely subordinated to a faith rendered luminous by contemplation, which, in pacified and docile souls, will one day culminate in perfect wisdom.[10]

To know the teaching of the Church on this subject we shall recall what the Council of Trent says: "The efficient cause [of our justification] is the merciful God who washes and sanctifies gratuitously (I Cor. 6:11), signing and anointing with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13 f.)."[11]

The Catechism of the Council of Trent fixes this point exactly by enumerating the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost according to Isaias (11:2 f.), and by adding: "These gifts of the Holy Ghost are for us, as it were, a divine source whence we draw the living knowledge of the precepts of Christian life. Moreover, by them we can know whether the Holy Ghost dwells in us."[12] St. Paul says, in fact: "For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God."[13] He gives us this testimony by the filial love which He inspires in us, and by which He makes Himself, so to speak, felt by us.[14]

One of the most beautiful testimonies that tradition offers us on the seven gifts is found in the liturgy for Pentecost. We read in the sequence for the Mass of that day:

6 Cf. *De Trinitate,* I, 12-14.

10 Cf. Fulbert Cayré, A.A., *La contemplation augustinienne,* chaps. 2 f. He shows here that contemplation, according to St. Augustine, is a supernatural wisdom. It has for its principle, together with faith, a superior action of the Holy Ghost, which makes the soul, so to speak, touch and taste God.

11 Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. 7.

12 *Catechism of the Council of Trent,* Part 1, chap. 9, § 3: "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

13 Rom. 8:16.

14 Cf. St. Thomas, *In Ep. ad Rom.,* 8:16.

Veni sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte coelitus
Lucis tuae radium.

"Come, O Holy Ghost, and send from heaven a ray of Thy light. Come, Father of the poor. Come, Giver of graces. Come, Light of hearts, excellent Counselor, sweet Guest of our soul, sweet Refreshment, Rest in labor, Coolness in heat, Comfort in tears."

O lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.

"O blessed Light, inundate the very depths of the hearts of Thy faithful. . . . Warm what is cold, straighten what is crooked."

Da tuis fidelibus,
In te confidentibus,
Sacrum septenarium.

"Give to Thy faithful who trust in Thee, the sacred sevenfold gift. Give them the merit of virtue. Give them a happy end. Give them eternal joy."

In the *Veni Creator Spiritus,* we read likewise:

Tu septiformis munere. . . .
Accende lumen sensibus,
Inftinde amorem cordibus.

"The sevenfold gift is Thine. . . . Kindle our senses with fire from above and pour Thy love into our hearts." [15]

Finally, the testimony of tradition is admirably expressed by the encyclical of Leo XIII on the Holy Ghost, in which the Pope declares that to complete our supernatural life we need the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Fie says:

> The just man, that is to say, he who lives the life of divine grace and acts by the fitting virtues as by means of faculties, has need of those seven gifts, which are properly attributed to the Holy Ghost. By means of them the soul is furnished and strengthened so as to be able to obey more easily and promptly His voice and impulse. Wherefore these gifts are of such efficacy that they lead the just man to the highest degree of sanctity; and of such excellence that they continue to exist even in heaven, though in a more perfect way. By means of these gifts the soul

'"The composer of this beautiful prayer, which will be said until the end of the world, must have been a great contemplative. It is useless to know his name; he was a voice of God.

is excited and encouraged to seek after and attain the evangelical beatitudes which, like the flowers that come forth in the springtime, are the signs and harbingers of eternal beatitude. . . .

These sublime truths, which so clearly show forth the infinite goodness of the Holy Ghost towards us, certainly demand that we should direct towards Him the highest homage of our love and devotion. Christians may do this most effectually if they will daily strive to know Him, to love Him, and to implore Him more earnestly. . . . What should be chiefly dwelt upon and clearly explained is the multitude and greatness of the benefits which have been bestowed, and are constantly bestowed, upon us by this divine Giver. . . . We owe to the Holy Ghost love, because Fie is God. . . . Fie is also to be loved because He is the substantial, eternal, primal Love, and nothing is more lovable than love. --- In the second place it will obtain for us a still more abundant supply of heavenly gifts; for whilst a narrow heart contracts the hand of the giver, a grateful and mindful heart causes it to expand. . . . Lastly, we ought confidently and continually to beg of Him to illuminate us daily more and more with His light and inflame us with His charity: for, thus inspired with faith and love, we may press onward earnestly towards our eternal reward, since "He is the pledge of our inheritance." [18]

Such are the principal testimonies of tradition regarding the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. We shall recall briefly the exact statements brought to bear on this point by theology, especially in the doctrine of St. Thomas. His teaching has been approved in substance by Leo XIII, who often quoted the Angelic Doctor in the encyclical, the principal parts of which we have just cited.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS [17]

The holy doctor shows us three things in particular: that the gifts are habitual permanent dispositions *(habitus)* specifically distinct

18 Encyclical *Divinum illud munus* (May 9, 1897), *circa finem.* This text shows: (1) the necessity of the gifts ("has need of"); (2) their nature: they make us docile to the Holy Ghost; (3) their effects: they can lead us to the summit of sanctity.

17 Cf. St. Thomas, *In III Sent.,* dist. 34 f.; la Ilae, q.68; Ila Ilae, q.8, 9, 19, 45, 52, 121, 139; see his commentators, especially Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, on la Ilae, q.68.

St. Bonaventure may also he consulted with profit. His doctrine differs on certain secondary points from that of St. Thomas; cf. *Breviloquium,* Part V, chaps. 5 f., and J. Fr. Bonnefoy, *Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons scion saint Bona-*

from the virtues; that the gifts are necessary to salvation; and that they are connected with charity and grow with it. St. Thomas says:

> To differentiate the gifts from the virtues, we must be guided by the way Scripture expresses itself, for we find there that the term employed is spirit rather than gift. For thus it is written (Isa. 11:2 f.): "The spirit --- of wisdom and of understanding . . . shall rest upon Him," and so on: from which words we are clearly given to understand that these seven are there set down as being in us by divine inspiration. Now inspiration denotes motion from without. For it must be noted that in man there is a twofold principle of movement, one within him, namely, the reason; the other extrinsic to him, namely, God, as stated above (Ia Ilae, q. 9, a. 4, 6), and also by the Philosopher in the chapter on Good Fortune *(Ethic. Ettdem.,* vii).
>
> Now it is evident that whatever is moved must be proportionate to its mover: and the perfection of the thing moved as such consists in a disposition whereby the thing moved is made proportionate to its mover. Hence the more exalted the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition whereby the movable object is made proportionate to its mover: thus we see that a disciple needs a more perfect disposition in order to receive a higher teaching from his master. Now it is manifest that human virtues perfect man according as it is natural for him to be moved by his reason [18] in his interior and exterior actions. Consequently man needs yet higher perfections, whereby to be disposed to be moved by God. These perfections are called gifts, not only because they are in-

venture (Paris: Vrin, 1929), and also art. "Bonaventure," *Diet, de spiritualité.*

See also Dionysius the Carthusian, *De donis Spiritus Sancti* (an excellent treatise); J. B. de Saint-Juré, S.J., *L'homme spirituel,* Part I, chap. 4, "Des sept dons"; L. Lallemant, S.J., *La doctrine spirituelle,* 4th principle, "La docilité à la conduite du Saint-Esprit." B. Froget, O.P., *De l'habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les âmes justes* (Paris, 1900), pp. 378-424. A. Gardeil, O.P., "Dons du Saint-Esprit," *Diet, de théol. cathol.,* IV, 1728-81; *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (Paris, 1927), II, 192-281; *Les dons du Saint-Esprit dans les saint dominicains* (the introduction particularly), 1903. See several other articles on various gifts in particular by the same theologian in *La vie spirituelle,* 1932, 1933.

D. Joret, O.P., *La contemplation mystique d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin,* 1927, pp. 30-62.

We have also treated this important subject at length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* chap. 5, a. 5 f., pp. 271-331. See also *La vie spirituelle,* November 19, 1932, suppl.: "Les dons ont-ils un mode humain"; *ibid.,* October, 1933, suppl.: "A propos du mode supra-humain des dons du Saint-Esprit," reproduced in this book, *infra,* pp. 78-88.

[18] In the supernatural order, it is a question of reason enlightened by faith. It is thus, in particular, that infused prudence directs the infused moral virtues.

fused by God, but also because by them man is disposed to become amenable to the divine inspiration,[18] according to Isa. 1:5: "The Lord . . . hath opened my ear, and I do not resist; I have not gone back." Even the Philosopher says in the chapter on Good Fortune *{Ethic. Eudem., loc. cit.)* that for those who are moved by divine instinct, there is no need to take counsel according to human reason, but only to follow their inner promptings, since they are moved by a principle higher than human reason. This, then, is what some say, that the gifts perfect man for acts which are higher than acts of virtue.[20]

Thus we see that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are not acts, or actual motions, or passing helps of grace, but rather qualities or permanent infused dispositions *{habitus'),*[21] which render a man promptly docile to divine inspirations. Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Divinum illud munus,* which we quoted at length a few pages back, placed his approval on this manner of conceiving of the gifts. They dispose man to obey the Holy Ghost promptly, as sails prepare a ship to follow the impulse of a favorable wind. By this passive docility, the gifts help us to produce those excellent works known as the beatitudes.[22] From this point of view, the saints are like great sailing vessels which, under full sail, properly catch the impelling force of the wind. The art of navigation teaches a mariner how and when he may most opportunely spread his sails to profit by a favorable breeze.

This figure is used by our Lord Himself when He says: "The Spirit breatheth where Fie will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" [23] and is docile to His inspiration. St. Thomas says [24] we do not really know where precisely the wind that blows was formed, or how far it will make itself felt. In the same way, we do not know where precisely a divine inspiration begins, or to what degree of perfection it would lead us if we were

18 "Secundum ea homo disponitur, ut efficiatur prompte mobilis ab inspiratione divina."

20 See Ia Hae, q.68, a. 1.

21 *Ibid.,* a. 3, and *111 Sent.* D. XXXIV, q. 1, a. 1.

22See Ia Hac, q.68, a.3: "The gifts of the Holy Ghost are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily the Holy Ghost." Cf. *ibid.,* q.70, a. 2: "The beatitudes are none but perfect works, which, by reason of their perfection, are assigned to the gifts rather than to the virtues."

28 John 3:8.

24 St. Thomas, *In Joannem,* 3:8.

wholly faithful to it. Let us not be like sailing vessels which, because of neglect in noting a favorable wind, have their sails furled when they should be spread.

According to these principles, the great majority of theologians hold with St. Thomas that the gifts are really and specifically distinct from the infused virtues, just as the principles which direct them are distinct: that is, the Holy Ghost and reason illumined by faith. We have here two regulating motions, two different rules that constitute different formal motives. It is a fundamental principle that habits are specified by their object and their formal motive, as sight by color and light, and hearing by sound. The human mode of acting results from the human rule; the superhuman mode results from the superhuman or divine rule, from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, "modus a mensura causatur." [25]*Thus even infused prudence proceeds by discursive deliberation, in which it differs from the gift of counsel, which disposes us to receive a special inspiration of a superdiscursive order.[20] Even infused prudence hesitates, for example, about what answer to give to an indiscreet question so as to avoid a lie and keep a secret; while a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost will enable us to find a proper reply, as Christ told His disciples.[27]

Likewise, while faith adheres simply to revealed truths, the gift of understanding makes us scrutinize their depths, and that of wisdom makes us taste them. The gifts are thus specifically distinct from the virtues.[28]

St. Thomas adds in his *Summa* [29] a statement that he had not made in his *Commentary on the Sentences,* namely, that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary to salvation. The Book of Wisdom (7:28) tells us in fact that: "God loveth none but him that dwelleth with

[25] This principle, contained in the commentary of St. Thomas on the *Sentences* and in his *Summa,* marks the continuity of these two works. Cf. Ill, D. XXXIV, q.2, a. 1, qc.j; q.3, a. 1, qc. 1; and la Ilae, q.68, a. 1, a.2 ad rum. See also *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* 7th ed., II, [52j–[64].

[28] See Ila Ilae, q.52, a. 1 ad mm.

[27] Matt. 10:19.

[28] Other serious difficulties would follow the negation of the specific distinction between the virtues and the gifts. We could not explain why certain gifts, such as fear, arc not numbered among the virtues, or why Christ had the seven gifts, as Isaias teaches us (11:2 f.), without having certain infused virtues, such as faith, hope, and penance, which suppose an imperfection.

[28] See la Ilae, q.68, a.2.

wisdom"; and we read in Ecclesiasticus (1:28): "He that is without fear (of God), cannot be justified." Wisdom is the highest of the gifts, and fear the lowest.

Moreover, St. Thomas notes that even the infused virtues, both theological and moral, which are adapted to the human mode of our faculties, leave us in a state of inferiority in regard to our supernatural end which should be known in a more lively, more penetrating, more delightful manner, and toward which we ought to advance with greater ardor.[30]

Even when faith is elevated, it remains essentially imperfect for three reasons: (1) because of the obscurity of its object, which it does not attain immediately, but "through a glass in a dark manner" (I Cor. 13:12); (2) it attains its object only by multiple dogmatic formulas, whereas God is supremely simple; (3) it attains its object in an abstract manner, by affirmative and negative propositions *{componendo et dividendo),* whereas, on the contrary, the living God is the light of life, whom we ought to be able to know, not in an abstract manner but in a quasi-experimental manner.[31] Hope shares the imperfection of faith, and so does charity as long as its object is proposed by faith.

With even greater reason, prudence, though infused, is imperfect from the fact that it must have recourse to reasoning, to the search for reasons for acting in order to direct the moral virtues. It frequently hesitates, for example, about a suitable answer to give to an indiscreet question so as to keep a secret and avoid a lie. In certain cases, only a good inspiration would be necessary to do so. The same thing is true when it is a case of efficaciously resisting certain temptations, either subtle, or violent and prolonged.

"Human reason," says St. Thomas, "even when perfected by the theological virtues, does not know all things, or all possible things. Consequently it is unable to avoid folly *{stultitia)* and other like things. . . . God, however, to whose knowledge and power all things are subject, by His motion safeguards us from all folly, ignorance, dullness of mind, hardness of heart, and the rest. Consequently the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which make us docile to His promptings, are said to be given as remedies for these defects."[32]

80 Ibid.

8t The gift of wisdom makes this possible.

82 Ibid., a. 2 ad 311m.

In this sense they are necessary to salvation, as sails are on a vessel that it may be responsive to a favorable wind, although it may advance also by means of oars. These two ways of advancing are quite distinct, although they may be united or simultaneous.

"By the theological and moral virtues," says St. Thomas, "man is not so perfected in respect of his last end as not to stand in continual need of being moved by the yet higher promptings of the Holy Ghost." [33] This need is permanent in man; for this reason the gifts are in us a permanent, infused disposition.[34]

We make use of the gifts somewhat as we do of the virtue of obedience in order to receive a superior direction with docility and to act according to this direction; but we do not have this superior

[83] *Ibid.,* ad zum. Some theologians, as Abbé Perriot *{Ami du clergé,* 1892, p. 391), basing their argument on the text of St. Thomas that we have just quoted, have thought that in his opinion the gifts intervene in every meritorious work. Father Froget, O.P. *{De l'habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les âmes justes,* Part IV, chap. 6, pp. 407-24) and Father Gardeil, O.P. *{Diet, théol. cath.,* art. "Dons," col. 1779) have shown that this is not at all the true thought of St. Thomas. To say that the gifts of the Holy Ghost must intervene in every meritorious act, even though it be imperfect *{remissus et quantumvis remissus),* would be to confound ordinary actual grace with the special inspiration to which the gifts render us docile. In the text which we have just quoted, St. Thomas means that man is not perfected to such a degree by the theological virtues that he does not always need to be inspired by the interior Master *{semper* not *pro-semper),* as we say: "I always need this hat," not however from morning until night, or from night until morning. Similarly a medical student is not so well instructed that he does not always need the assistance of his master for certain operations. The need we experience is not transitory but permanent; all of which goes to show that the gifts should be not transitory inspirations, like the grace of prophecy, but permanent infused dispositions.

Moreover, it is certain that man can make a supernatural act of faith with an actual grace, without any assistance from the gifts of the Holy Ghost, without penetrating or tasting the mysteries to which he adheres. This is the case with the believer who is in the state of mortal sin, and who, on losing charity, has lost the seven gifts.

But, on the other hand, it is commonly admitted that the gifts of the Holy Ghost frequently influence us in a latent manner without our being aware of it, in order to give our meritorious acts a perfection which they would not have without this influence. In like manner, a favorable breeze facilitates the work of the rowers.

As St. Thomas teaches, la Ilae, q.68, a.8, the gifts are in this way superior to the infused moral virtues. Although the gifts are less elevated than the theological virtues, they bring them an added perfection, that, for example, of penetrating and delighting in the mysteries of faith.

[84] See la Ilae, q.68, a.3.

inspiration whenever we wish.[35] In this sense by means of the gifts we are passive in regard to the Holy Ghost that we may act under His influence. This will explain more clearly why, like obedience, the gifts are a permanent disposition in the just man.[3']

This great fitness, and even this necessity of the gifts, is better seen if we consider the perfection which each of them gives either to the intellect, or to the will and to the sensible part of the soul, as St. Thomas points out.[3T]

The following synopsis explains the statement just made:

	gift of_____	
for the penetration of truth.....	understanding	faith
divine things.....	wisdom	charity
to judge 4 created things.....	knowledge	hope
.our actions.....	counsel	prudence
relative to worship due to God....piety		religion
against the fear of danger.....	fortitude	
against disorderly concupiscences, .fear		temperance

We see that those gifts which direct the others are superior; among them the gift of wisdom is the highest because it gives us a quasi-experimental knowledge of God, and thereby, a judgment about divine things which is superior even to the penetration of the gift of understanding (which belongs rather to first apprehension than to judgment).

85 John of St. Thomas, *De donis,* Disp. 18, a. 2, no. 31.

80 St. Thomas (la Ilae, q.68, a. 3) and his commentators, in particular John of St. Thomas, show clearly that it is highly fitting that the gifts should be permanent dispositions in us *(habitus')* in order to render us habitually docile to the Holy Ghost, who always remains in the just soul, as the moral virtues are permanent dispositions to render the will and the sensible part of the soul habitually docile to the direction of right reason.

If it were otherwise, the organism of the life of grace, which is the greatest of the gifts of God, would remain imperfect. It is not fitting that, according to the plan of Providence, which disposes all things *suaviter et fortiter,* the organism of the supernatural life in the just soul should be in this respect less perfect than that of the acquired virtues directed by reason. Finally, according to tradition, habitual grace is called "rhe grace of the virtues and gifts." Cf. Sr. Thomas, Illa, q.62, a. 2.

8T Sec la Ilae, q.68, a.4, and Ila Ilae, q.8, a.6.

The gift of knowledge corresponds to hope in this sense, that it makes us see the emptiness of created things and of human help, and consequently the necessity of placing our confidence in God in order to attain to the possession of Him. The gift of fear also perfects hope by preserving us from presumption; but it corresponds also to temperance to aid us against temptations.[38] To these seven gifts correspond the beatitudes which are their acts, as St. Thomas so well shows.[39]

Finally, from the necessity of the gifts for salvation it follows that they are connected with charity, according to St. Paul's words to the Romans (5:5): "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." The Holy Ghost does not come to us without His seven gifts, which thus accompany charity and which, consequently, are lost with it by mortal sin.

They thus belong to the spiritual organism of sanctifying grace, which is therefore called "the grace of the virtues and the gifts." [40] Since all the infused virtues grow together like the five fingers of the hand,[41] the same must be said of the seven gifts. Hence we cannot conceive of a Christian having that high degree of charity which is proper to perfection, without at the same time having the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a proportionate degree, although perhaps in him the gifts of understanding and of wisdom may be exercised un-

38 See IIa IIae, q. 141, a. 1 ad 3um.

39 See Ia IIae, q.69, a. 3, c. and ad 3um; IIa IIae, q.8, a. 7; q.9, a.4; q.45, a.6; q. 19, a. 12; q. 121, a.2; q. 139, a.2.

Following St. Augustine, St. Thomas shows that the gift of wisdom corresponds to the beatitude of the peacemakers, for it gives peace and allows the soul possessing it to give it to others, at times even to the most troubled. The gift of understanding corresponds to the beatitude of the clean of heart; for those who possess this cleanness of heart begin here on earth, in a certain way, to see God in all that happens to us. The gift of knowledge, which shows us the gravity of sin, corresponds to the beatitude of those who weep for their sins. The gift of counsel, which inclines the soul to mercy, corresponds to the beatitude of the merciful. The gift of piety, which makes us see in men not rivals, but children of God and our brothers, corresponds to the beatitude of the meek. The gift of fortitude corresponds to that of those who hunger and thirst after justice and never become discouraged. Finally, the gift of fear corresponds to the beatitude of the poor in spirit; they possess the holy fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

40 See IIIa, q.62, a. 2: "Whether sacramental grace confers anything in addition to the grace of the virtues and gifts." Sr. Thomas says here that habitual grace is so called because from it proceed the infused virtues and the gifts, as so many functions of the same organism.

41 See Ia IIae, q.66, a.2.

der a less contemplative and more practical form than in others. This was the case with St. Vincent de Paul and many other saints who were called to devote themselves to their neighbor in the works of the active life.[42]

We shall treat later of docility to the Holy Ghost and of the conditions it demands,[43] but we see even now the value of this spiritual organism, which is eternal life begun in us. This life is more precious than sight, than physical life, than the use of reason, in this sense, that the loss of the use of reason does not deprive the just man of this treasure, which death itself cannot snatch from us. This grace of the virtues and gifts is also more precious than the gift of miracles or of tongues or of prophecy; for these charismata are, so to speak, only exterior, supernatural signs, which can point out the way that leads to God, but cannot unite us to Him as sanctifying grace and charity can.[44]

To see more clearly how the diverse functions of this spiritual organism should be exercised, we must speak of the actual grace necessary to the exercise of the virtues and the gifts.[45]

APPENDIX

The Superhuman Mode of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost

Since we have treated this question of the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in other works,[1] we shall briefly recall

42 Pursuing the comparison we have already used, we note that among sailing vessels equally responsive to the wind, the brig differs from the schooner; the form and arrangement of the sails vary; in certain places one type of sail is better than another. Something similar is found in the order of spiritual navigation toward the port of salvation.

43 Cf. *infra,* Part Ill, chap. 23.

44 See la Ilae, q. nt, a.j: "Whether *gratia gratum faciens* is nobler than *gratia gratis data."* St. Thomas answers with St. Paul (I Cor. 13:1) that sanctifying grace, which is inseparable from charity, is far more excellent than graces *gratis datae.*

45 The theological virtues, which unite us to the Holy Ghost, are superior to the seven gifts, although they receive a new perfection from the gifts; thus a tree is more perfect than its fruit. These virtues are the rule of the gifts, in the sense that the gifts make us penetrate more deeply and taste with greater delight the mysteries to which we adhere by faith; but the immediate rule of the act of the gifts is the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

1 Cf. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 272-77,324 ff.

the exact meaning of what we have previously written on this point and add some new and exact statements.

IN WHAT SENSE CAN THE GIFTS HAVE TWO MODES, THAT ON EARTH AND THAT OF HEAVEN?

We have several times recalled this incontestable truth, namely, that one *habitus* cannot have acts whose formal object is distinct from that of the *habitus,* and we have admitted that in the specifying object of the *habitus* two different modes of acting may be found, as, for example, in the case of the infused virtues and the gifts, their mode of acting here on earth and their mode in heaven. But we have emphasized the fact that one and rhe same *habitus* cannot be the principle of acts that have distinct modes, such as that of earth and that of heaven, unless the first mode is ordained to the second and thus falls under one and the same formal object.

A recent work offering an entirely contrary opinion [2] states that the gifts of the Holy Ghost would, according to St. Thomas, have even here on earth two specifically distinct modes, the one ordinary, the other essentially extraordinary; the latter would be required for the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith. Consequently contemplation would not be in the normal way of sanctity.

We replied to this opinion.[3] The essence of our reply, which should not be overlooked, was as follows: "If there were here on earth two specifically distinct modes for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, one of which would be ordinary, and the other not only eminent, but intrinsically and extrinsically extraordinary, the act characterized by the human mode would not be ordained to the act characterized by a superhuman and essentially extraordinary mode. (It would not be ordained to it any more than to the acts which suppose graces *gratis datae,* such as prophecy.) On the contrary, the act of the gifts exercised on earth is essentially ordained to that of heaven. They are, as St. Thomas insisted in the *Quaestiones disputatae, 'in eadem serie motus,'* in the same series of operations, and the last must be placed, otherwise all that precede fail to attain their end.

[2] P. Chrysogonous, O.C.D., *La perfection et la mystique selon les principes de saint Thomas,* Bruges, 1932.

[3] Cf. *I.a vie spirituelle,* November, 1932, suppl., pp. [77] ff.

"This text from the *Quaestiones disputatae* [4] in no way contradicts what we have said. It does not state that the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost have on earth two specifically distinct acts, one ordinary, the other essentially extraordinary. It states quite the contrary; for it demands that for one and the same *habitus* the less perfect act should be ordained to the second, just as the foundation of a building is to the superstructure, as Christian life on earth is to that of heaven." We even underlined *{ibid.,* p. 76) in the text of St. Thomas invoked against our opinion, the word *ordinetur,* which the writer had neglected to consider.

R. Dalbiez, writing in the *Etudes Carmélitaines,* April, 1933 (pp. 250 fl.), made the same observation that we did. He placed in parallel columns the integral text of St. Thomas and the quotation that Father Chrysogonous had taken from it, although the latter failed to cite these significant words: "Si autem non accipiatur unum in ordine ad aliud, tunc non erunt eaedem virtutes, nec secundum actum nec secundum habitum." [5] Father Dalbiez adds *{ibid.)* : "The passage which I have underlined and which Father Chrysogonous did not quote is quite unfavorable to his thesis. . . . The idea of finding in this so-called definitive text the slightest support for the thesis of the two modes, human and superhuman, of the terrestrial acts of the gifts of the Floly Ghost must be abandoned."

P. Périnclle, in the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques,* November, 1932 (p. 692), makes a like observation on the central argument of the thesis. He adds that Father Chrysogonous was mistaken in saying that according to St. Thomas there are three infused intellectual virtues (understanding, knowledge, and wisdom) parallel to the gifts of the Floly Ghost, and that it is only since the Fall that the gifts are necessary.

What most interests us here is that the author did not at all succeed in proving the principal point that he wished to establish: namely, that the gifts have here below two specifically distinct modes of operating, one ordinary, the other essentially extraordinary, which would characterize infused contemplation.

[4] *Quaestio unica de virtutibus cardinalibus,* a. 4: "Utrum virtutes cardinales maneant in patria."

[5] *Quaestio unica de virtutibus cardinalibus,* a. 4, in corp.

WHETHER THE SUPERHUMAN MODE OF THE GIFTS CAN BE LATENT

We have often affirmed that ordinarily the superhuman mode of the gifts is at first quite hidden, that is, in the ascetical life, and that this mode becomes more manifest in the mystical life, at least for an experienced director.[6] We may express this teaching more exactly by stating that in the ascetical life the influence of the gifts is either latent and quite frequent (it makes one think of the breeze which only facilitates the work of the rowers), or manifest but rare (in certain striking circumstances), whereas, on the contrary, in the mystical life the influence of the gifts is both frequent and manifest. It is not, however, always striking, as in the case of the great contemplatives, but occasionally diffuse, very real nevertheless, as is the case in saints who have an active vocation, such as St. Vincent de Paul.[7]

Some may object: "The operation belonging to the superhuman mode could not remain hidden; the soul necessarily perceives it from the very fact that this operation deviates from the natural mode of the subject." This assertion springs from the preceding one which, we have seen, has not been proved. It would be true if the gifts had here on earth two specifically distinct modes, and if the superhuman mode were extraordinary to the point of requiring infused ideas or a manifestly supernatural arrangement of our acquired ideas. But this is not so. Even in the case of prophecy, which is an extraordinary grace, there may be, says St. Thomas, a prophetic instinct hidden even from him who receives it; by it he can, like Caiphas, prophesy without knowing it. "The prophet's mind is instructed by God in two ways: in one way by an express revelation, in another way by a most mysterious instinct 'to which the human mind is subjected without knowing it,' as Augustine says *{Gen. ad lit.,* II, 17)." [8]

Since this is true for prophecy, which is an essentially extraordinary grace, with even greater reason is it true of the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to which the gifts, present in all the just, should render them docile. All spiritual writers admit that this

[6] Cf. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 282-85; 324 #4 32^.

[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 320 ff.

[8] See Ila llac, <1-171, a.5. Cf. *ibid.,* q. 173, a.4, where St. Thomas gives the example of Caiphas, who prophesied without knowing that he did so.

special inspiration, which resembles the breeze that comes up at the right moment, is ordinarily latent and almost imperceptible at first, and that, if it is not resisted, it generally becomes stronger and more urgent. Innumerable passages from Scripture, from the fathers, from St. Thomas, and St. John of the Cross could be quoted on this point. They make this statement in particular when commenting on Christ's words: "The Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice; but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." [9] The inspiration, at first latent and obscure, becomes more manifest, luminous, and compelling if one is faithful.

St. John of the Cross expresses the same idea in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel:* "It is indispensable to possess this knowledge proper to contemplation before leaving discursive meditation. But it is to be remembered that this general knowledge ... is at times so subtle and delicate, particularly when most pure, simple, perfect, spiritual, and interior, that the soul, though in the practice thereof, is not observant or conscious of it." [10]

The special inspiration which we should receive with docility through the gifts of the Holy Ghost is undoubtedly often quite hidden. According to spiritual writers, we must establish ourselves in silence that we may be attentive to this inspiration, hear it, and then distinguish between it and one that might lead us astray. This is the whole question of the discernment of spirits. This admonition is frequently expressed in *The Imitation of Christ:* "Consider these things, O my soul, and close up the doors of thy sensual desires; that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaketh within thee." [11] Moreover, there are certainly many degrees of docility to the Holy Ghost, from our first response to the attraction of our vocation up to the last moment when we give up our souls to God.

ARE THERE DEGREES IN DETACHMENT FROM CREATURES?

Is detachment from creatures the same for the greatest saints and for souls that have reached a lesser perfection? To formulate the question is to solve it; we have never had the slightest doubt on this point.

One must be possessed of a certain juvenile daring to write: "De-

[9] John 3:8.

[10] Bk. II, chap. 14.

[11] Bk. III, chap. 1; *ibid.*, chaps. 1 f.

tachment from creatures ought to be the same for all perfect souls: that is, total, absolute, universal. It is impossible to find a mean between having and not having defects. Now perfection by its nature excludes all defects, whether directly or indirectly voluntary. The interior fervor exercised in detaching oneself from everything will vary in the subject according to the degree of the grace received, which is the seed of more or less striking victories; but objectively speaking, the renunciation of everything, no matter how small, which is opposed to the divine will, must be total and without any exception."

The logical formalism which halts at the formula: "It is impossible to find a mean between having and not having defects," ought not to make us forget the concrete order of things, or the great difference that exists among perfect souls, from the least elevated up to the holy soul of Christ. In concrete reality, renunciation, even objectively considered, progresses together with the fervor of will of the subject in which it exists. In fact, an already perfect soul can undeniably still progress, and in that soul detachment from creatures increases with union with God. These are two aspects of the progress of the life of grace, which continues in the unitive way. Thus many indirectly voluntary defects, the result of a practically unheeded negligence, are progressively eliminated in proportion as the depth of the soul is purified and more intimately and continually united to God.

Moreover, it is certain that a just man, even though perfect, cannot continually avoid all venial sins, although he can avoid each venal sin in particular. As he grows in charity, he avoids them more and more, so that in the transforming union, as St. Teresa explains,[12] the soul is practically freed from the trouble of the passions; as long as it is under the actual grace of the transforming union, it does not commit deliberate venial sins. Outside of these moments, it may still commit some venial fault, which is quickly atoned for. Though some perfect souls are confirmed in good, this is not true of all of them.

Finally, we must not forget that detachment from creatures was far greater in the Blessed Virgin than in the greatest saints, since she never committed the slightest venial sin. It was even greater still in the holy soul of Christ, who not only never actually sinned, but who was, even here on earth, absolutely impeccable. Therefore it is truly an exaggeration of simplicity to say: "It is impossible to find

[12] *The Interior Castle,* seventh mansion, chap. 1.

a mean between having and not having defects." What is true, is that there is no mean between being or not being absolutely impeccable, between continually avoiding or not avoiding every venial sin, between wishing or not wishing to strive henceforth to avoid them more and more. According to St. Thomas, "man *(poenitens)* needs to have the purpose of taking steps to commit fewer venial sins." [13] According as this will is more or less intense or fervent, he will actually avoid them more or less. Detachment from creatures will increase with the progress of charity or of attachment to God. Father Chardon strongly insisted on this point in his beautiful book, *La croix de Jésus.*

From all evidence, there are many degrees in what St. Thomas expresses in this manner: "Perfection can be had in this life . . . by the removal from man's affections not only of whatever is contrary to charity, but also of whatever hinders the mind's affections from tending wholly to God." [14] In this detachment there are many degrees even in regard to the exclusion of venial sins: "Those who are perfect in this life arc said to offend in many things with regard to venial sins, which result from a weakness of the present life." [15] This statement is not exaggerated in its simplicity; it is rather the simple expression of Christian good sense.[16]

ARE THE PASSIVE PURIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE MORAL DEFECTS?

Our opponent writes in one of his replies: "We think that the defects pointed out by St. John of the Cross in *The Dark Night*

[13] *Summa,* Illa, q.87, a. 1 ad lum.

[14] See Ila Ilae, q. 184, a. 2.

[15] *Ibid.,* ad zum.

[16] These last texts quoted from St. Thomas demonstrate, in spite of what may have been occasionally said on the subject, that he would by no means condemn the teaching of spiritual writers in regard to the mortification of activity that is called "natural," that is, not sanctified, which develops to the detriment of the life of grace. St. Thomas insists here that in order to reach perfection one should will to exclude "whatever hinders the mind's affections from tending wholly to God." If a person does not oblige himself by vow to practice the three evangelical counsels, he ought at least to have the spirit of these counsels in order to be perfect (Ila llac, q. 184, a.3). To attain this end, it is thus recommended that a person should not be too much concerned with earthly things, but should use the goods of this world as though not using them. In this renunciation there is evidently a progress even in those who are already perfect.

under the name of capital sins, are all voluntary and that consequently the soul can, with the help of ordinary grace, free itself from them. Does Father Garrigou-Lagrange believe that the soul cannot purify itself of spiritual gluttony, spiritual laziness, spiritual pride, and other defects of this type ... by the exercise of asceticism? We repeat here what we wrote elsewhere: that, if it could not free itself from them, these defects would no longer be voluntary and consequently would not hinder perfection."

We answer that St. Thomas avoids this excessively simple and superficial manner of considering things, when he teaches the necessity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of the corresponding inspirations for salvation and perfection.'' We have seen in the course of this study that he by no means admits that the gifts would have here on earth two specifically distinct modes, one ordinary, the other essentially extraordinary, such as that of graces *gratis datae.*

The soul can free itself of certain moral defects only by docility to the special inspirations of the Holy Ghost. It would be entirely false to say that if the soul cannot deliver itself from them without these special inspirations, "these defects are no longer voluntary and therefore do not hinder perfection." The gifts of the Holy Ghost are given to all the just precisely to enable them to receive with docility these special inspirations, whose superhuman mode, that is at first latent, grows progressively more manifest if the soul is docile. St. Thomas says in fitting terms: "Whether we consider human reason as perfected in its natural perfection, or as perfected by the theological virtues, it docs not know all things, or all possible things. Consequently it is unable to avoid folly and other like things mentioned in the objection. God, however, to whose knowledge and power all things arc subject, by His motion safeguards us from all folly, ignorance, dullness of mind, and hardness of heart, and the rest. Consequently the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which make us amenable to His promptings, are said to be given as remedies for these defects." [18]

We hold, therefore, that the special inspirations of the Holy Ghost are necessary that the soul may be purified of a certain rudeness or harshness, of dullness, of spiritual folly, and other similar defects, which are not only opposed to a certain psychological purity,

17 See la Ilae, q.68, a. 2.
18 *Ibid.,* ad 311m.

but to moral purity. Without progressive docility to these special inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the depth of the soul will not be purified of its more or less unconscious egoism which mingles, under the form of indirectly voluntary negligence, in many of our acts and in many more or less culpable omissions.

To say that the passive purifications are not necessary to perfect moral purity would be to deny the necessity of the passive purification of the will, which frees the acts of hope and charity from all human alloy.[18] In this connection we may profitably recall what St. Teresa wrote in her *Life:* "For instance, they read that we must not be troubled when men speak ill of us, that we are to be then more pleased than when they speak well of us; that we must despise our own good name, be detached from our kindred, . . . with many other things of the same kind. The disposition to practice this must be, in my opinion, the gift of God; for it seems to me a supernatural good." [20] The meaning which the saint gives to this last expression is well known. Moreover, she remarks more than once that the progress of the virtues normally accompanies that of prayer, and that profound humility is ordinarily the fruit of the infused contemplation of the infinite grandeur of God and of our own wretchedness. This growth in virtue is not something accidental; it is the normal development of the interior life.

St. John of the Cross clearly holds that the passive purifications are necessary for the profound purity of the will. It will suffice to recall what he says of the defects that necessitate the passive purification of the senses and that of the spirit. In *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Bk. I, chaps. 2-9, and Bk. II, chaps. 1 f.) he speaks, especially in the last two chapters named, of the "stains of the old man" which still remain in the spirit, like rust which will disappear only under the action of an intense fire. Among the defects of proficients which require "the strong lye of the night of the spirit," he mentions rudeness, impatience, secret pride, unconscious egoism which causes some souls to use spiritual goods in anything but a detached manner, with the result that they fall into illusions. Evidently they lack not only psychological but moral purity. Finally, in the opinion of St. John of the Cross, these passive purifications (which belong to the

[18] We treated this subject at considerable length in *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* II, 597-632; "The Passive Purification of Hope and of Charity."

[20] *Life,* chap. 31,821.

mystical order) and infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith are indubitably in the normal way of sanctity since he wrote the two following propositions, which are of primary importance in his work: "The passive purification of the senses is common, it takes place in the greater number of beginners"; being passive, it belongs not to the ascetical but to the mystical order.[21] "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul." [22] St. John of the Cross most certainly wished to note here not something accidental, but something that is produced normally in the way of sanctity when a soul that is truly docile to the Holy Ghost does not recoil in the face of trial.

We maintain, therefore, what we have always taught on this point. Moreover, the Carmelite theologians have taught the same doctrine. Philip of the Blessed Trinity [23] and Anthony of the Holy Ghost[24] state very clearly: "All ought to aspire to supernatural contemplation. All, and especially souls consecrated to God, ought to aspire and to tend to the actual union of enjoyment with God." (These theologians assign the same meaning to the words "supernatural" and "infused" when they apply them to contemplation.) Finally, as we have more than once remarked, Joseph of the Holy Ghost wrote: "If infused contemplation is taken in the sense of rapture, ecstasy, or similar favors, we cannot apply ourselves to it, or ask it of God, or desire it; but as for infused contemplation in itself, as an act of contemplation (abstraction being made of ecstasy which may accidentally accompany it), we can aspire to it, desire it ardently, and humbly ask it of God, although we cannot certainly endeavor to have it by our own industry or our own activity." [25] Joseph of the Holy Ghost even says: "God usually raises to infused contemplation the soul that exercises itself fervently in acquired contemplation. This is the common teaching." [26]

We have never taught anything else. This is truly the teaching of

[21] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.
[22] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 14.
[23] *Sttumia theol. myst.* (ed. >874), II, 299; III, 43.
[24] *Directorium mysticum* (ed. 1733), tr. Ill, disp. Ill, sect. IV; tr. IV, disp. I, sect. VI.
[25] *Cursus theol. scol. myst.,* II, II Pracd., disp. XI, q. 11, nos. 18, 23.
Ibid., disp. VIII

St. John of the Cross, and it conforms fully to that left us by St. Thomas on the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are connected with charity and which, as infused habits, grow with charity. The full perfection of Christian life is inconceivable without them and without the special inspirations to which they render us docile.

ARTICLE V

Actual Grace and Its Divers Forms

We shall recall here: (i) the necessity of actual grace; (2) its divers forms; and (3) the general nature of fidelity to grace.

THE NECESSITY OF ACTUAL GRACE

Even in the natural order, no created agent acts or operates without the cooperation of God, first Mover of bodies and spirits. In this sense, St. Paul says in his discourse on the Areopagus: "Although He (God) be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and are." [1] With even greater reason in the supernatural order, that we may produce acts of the infused virtues and of the gifts, we need a divine motion, which is called actual grace. It is a truth of faith defined against the Pelagians and the Semi-Pelagians,[2] that, without this grace, we can neither dispose ourselves positively to conversion, nor persevere for a notable time in good, nor above all persevere until death. Without actual grace, we cannot produce the slightest salutary act, or, with even greater reason, reach perfection. This is what Christ meant when He said to His disciples: "Without Me you can do nothing." [3] St. Paul adds with regard to the order of salvation: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves," [4] and that "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish," [5] by actualizing our liberty without violating it. It is He who gives us to dispose ourselves to habitual grace and to act meritoriously. When He crowns our merits,

1 Acts 17:27 f.

2Cf. The Council of Orange (Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* nos. 176-200) and also St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 109.

8 John 15:5.

' See II Cor. 3:5.

0 Phil. 2:13.

it is still His gifts that He crowns, says St. Augustine. The Church has often recalled this idea in her councils.®

This explains why we must always pray. The necessity of prayer is founded on the necessity of actual grace. Except for the first grace, which is gratuitously given to us without our praying for it, since it is the very principle of prayer, it is a thoroughly established truth that prayer is the normal, efficacious, and universal means by which God wishes that we should obtain all the actual graces we need. This is why our Lord inculcates so often the necessity of prayer to obtain grace. He says: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." 7 He recalls this necessity of prayer to obtain actual grace, especially when temptation is to be resisted: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 8 In prayer we ought to recognize that God is the Author of all good; and therefore all confidence not founded on prayer is presumptuous.9

Therefore the Council of Trent declares in St. Augustine's own words: "God never commands the impossible, but in commanding He tells us to do what we can, to ask for that which we are not able to do, and He helps us in order that we may be able." 10 By His actual grace He even helps us to pray. There are, consequently, actual graces which we can obtain only by prayer.11

We could not insist too strongly on this point, for many beginners, unwittingly impregnated with practical naturalism, as the Pelagians and the Semi-Pelagians were, imagine that everything can be attained with will and energy, even without actual grace. Experience soon shows them the profound truth of Christ's words: "Without Me you can do nothing," and also that of St. Paul's statement: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish." Therefore we must ask Him for the actual grace ever more faithfully to keep the commandments, especially the supreme precept of the love of God and of our neighbor.

0 Denzinger, nos. 182-200 and 141.
' Matt. 7:7 f.
• *Ibid.,* 26:41.
* *Sunnna,* Ila Ilac, q.83, a. 2, c. and ad 311m.
10 Session VI, chap. 11 (Denzinger, 804).
11 Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV, chap. 1, no. 3.

THE DIFFERENT ACTUAL GRACES

Actual grace, the necessity of which we have just recalled, presents itself under many forms which it is highly useful to know in the spiritual life. It will be well at this point to review the principles as clearly as possible, without failing to recognize the mystery they express. It is one of the most remarkable partly clear and partly obscure mysteries of Christian doctrine.

Actual grace is often given to us as a light or interior illumination. For example, while reading the Epistle or Gospel of the day at Mass, an interior light is given to us that we may better grasp its meaning. We are struck by these words of Christ to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God," [12] or by those of St. Paul: "The Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me," [13] and we consider that He continues to offer Himself for us in the Mass and that, if we wish, He will give Himself to us, especially in Holy Communion. This light constitutes a grace of interior illumination.[14] It is followed by a grace of inspiration and attraction, for, in thinking of the generous and disinterested love of the Savior, we feel ourselves strongly led to return Him love for love. This is an actual grace which acts on the will and leads to love and to action. At times it even brings one to will to give oneself fully to God, to suffer, and if need be, to die for Him. Then it is not only a grace of attraction, but a grace of strength, which, though often received without our being at all aware of it, makes it possible for us in aridity to endure and to wait.[15]

How does actual grace, which moves the will, influence it? It does this in two ways: either by proposing to it an object which attracts it, or by a motion or interior impulse which God alone can

12 John 4:10.

13 Gal. 2:20.

14 Sometimes a very elevated luminous grace gives the impression of obscurity: the obscurity is transluminous, like the excessively strong light of the sun which dazzles the weak eyes of an owl.

15 Many of these graces are not felt at all when received; they are of an entirely spiritual and supernatural order and consequently surpass our natural means of knowledge. Some of them are felt by reason of the repercussion they have on our sensibility, for example, under the form of sensible consolations. Of others, which do not have this repercussion, we may, nevertheless, be conscious, in rhe sense that God, especially by rhe gift of wisdom, makes Himself spiritually fclr by us as the principle of the filial love for Him which He inspires in us. Cf. St. Thomas, *hi Ep. aa Rom.,* 8:16.

give.[18] God can evidently incline our will toward good by proposing an object to it, for example, by the promise of eternal beatitude, or of progress in love. Thus a mother inclines the will of her child to good, either by proposing to him a sensible object which attracts him, or by persuading him to conduct himself in a becoming manner. Our guardian angels can do this also by suggesting good thoughts to us. What God alone can do, is to move our will to good by an interior motion or impulse, for He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. He preserves in existence our soul and our faculties, of which He is the Author; and, without doing violence to them, He can move them from within according to their natural inclination by giving us a new energy. An example will help to make this understood: In order to teach her child to walk, a mother takes hold of him under his arms and helps him not only with her voice by showing him an object to attain, but by her gesture, by lifting him up. What the mother does thus in the corporeal order, God can do in the spiritual order. He can lift up, not only our body but our will itself, to lead it to good. He is the very Author of our will; He has given it its fundamental inclination to good, and in consequence He alone can move it from within according to this inclination. He acts thus in us, in the very inmost depths of our will, to make us will and act. The more urgently we ask Him to do this, the more strongly does He act to increase in us the love that we should have for Him.

Moreover, actual grace is called prevenient grace when it arouses a good thought or good feeling in us, when we have done nothing to excite it in ourselves. If we do not resist this grace, God adds to it a helping or concomitant grace, which will assist our will to produce the salutary act demanded and to realize our good designs. Thus, as St. Paul says: "God works in us both to will and to accomplish."

Finally, we must note that God sometimes moves us to act by deliberation according to the human mode, and at other times by special inspiration to act in a superior manner without deliberation on our part. The following is an example of the first case: I see that the habitual hour to recite the Rosary has come, and of my own accord I am led by deliberation to recite it. I do so under the influence of a common actual grace, called cooperating, for it cooperates in my action according to the human mode of deliberation.

*· See la, q. 105, a.4; la line, q.9, a.6; q. 10, a.4; q. 109, a.a, 3, 4, 10.

The second mode may be illustrated by the following example: It may happen that in an unexpected way while doing absorbing work, I receive a special inspiration to say a short prayer, and I immediately do it. This special inspiration is called an operating grace, for it operates in us without deliberation on our part, not however without vital, free, and meritorious consent.[17] In the first manner, God generally moves us to act according to the human mode of the virtues; in the second manner, He moves us to act according to the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Our ship then advances no longer solely by dint of rowing, but by the superior impulse of a favorable wind.

All that we have said about the different modes of divine motion may be summed up in the following table, which should be read upward.

God moves our mind and our wiU	in the supernatural order	above deliberation, by special inspiration to which the gifts of the Holy Ghost render us docile.
		after deliberation, to will a definite act of a specific infused virtue, for example, of religion directed by prudence.
		before deliberation, to will efficaciously the supernatural last end.[18]
	in the natural order	above deliberation, by special inspiration, for example, in the poetic order.
		after deliberation, to will a definite act of a specified acquired virtue.
		before deliberation, to will good in general and happiness.

17 See la Ilae, q. m, a.2. Under cooperating grace, the will moves itself deliberately in virtue of an anterior act. It is thus that, already willing the end, it is led to the choice of means; whereas under operating grace it is moved not by virtue of an anterior act, but of a special inspiration.

18 Here there is certainly deliberation. It is not, however, by virtue of deliberation and of an anterior act that the sinner, ar the moment of his conversion, is moved efficaciously to will the supernatural last end, for every anterior act is inferior to this efficacious will, ami can only dispose to it. Consequently a special operating grace is necessary here. This grace is not required when, already efficaciously willing the end, we arc led of ourselves to will the means. Then, only cooperating grace is required.

Under operating grace, we are more passive than active, and our activity consists especially in consenting freely to the operation of God, in allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Ghost, in promptly and generously following His inspirations.[18] But even under cooperating grace all our salutary action is from God as from the First Cause, and it is all from us as from the second cause.

FIDELITY TO GRACE

Fidelity to grace is of the utmost importance, and especially so is increasing fidelity to the actual grace of the present moment, that we may correspond to the duty of that moment, which manifests the will of God in our regard. St. Augustine says: "God who created you without yourself, will not sanctify you without your-

19 We treated this subject at greater length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 285-310; "The special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and common actual grace." According to a number of texts from St. Thomas, and following several great Thomists, in particular Father del Prado, we showed in that article that God moves the will, either before deliberation (when He leads it to will beatitude in general, or also the supernatural last end), or after deliberation, or with it (when He moves it to determine by discursive deliberation to will the means in view of the previously willed end), or above deliberation (by special inspiration, in particular by that to which the gifts of the Holy Ghost render us docile).

St. Thomas enumerates these three modes of motion in various passages: la Ilae, q.9, a.6 ad 3 um; q.68, a.2 f.; q. 109, a. 1, 2, 6, 9; q. 111, a. 2; *De veritate,* q.24, a. 15.

It suffices here to quote the classic text of la Ilae, q. 111, a. 2, on the distinction between operating and cooperating grace: "The operation of an effect is not attributed to the thing moved but to the mover. Hence in that effect in which our mind is moved and does not move, but in which God is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to God, and it is with reference to this that we speak of operating grace. But in that effect in which our mind both moves and is moved *{virtute prioris actus),* the operation is attributed not only to God, but also to the soul; and it is with reference to this that we speak of cooperating grace." The operating grace may, however, present itself under several forms: (1) it may be only exciting, leading to a salutary good thought, which, as a matter of fact, remains sterile; (2) it may lead even to a salutary act of faith or hope, without there being the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as happens in the believer in the state of mortal sin; (3) it may lead even to a salutary and meritorious act of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In this last case particularly, there is a special inspiration, not only before deliberation but above it. We can either be moved, or we can move ourselves to an act of faith (although it may be simple and not discursive), whereas we cannot of ourselves move ourselves to an act of the gifts.

self." [20] Our consent is needed and likewise our obedience to the precepts. God's help is given us, he says again, not that our will should do nothing, but that it may act in a salutary and meritorious manner. Actual grace is constantly offered to us for the accomplishment of the duty of the present moment, just as air comes constantly into our lungs to permit us to breathe. As we must inhale in order to draw into our lungs the air which renews our blood, so we must will to receive with docility the grace which renews our spiritual energies in the journey toward God. A person who does not inhale will die of asphyxiation; he who does not receive grace with docility will eventually die of spiritual asphyxiation. This is why St. Paul says: "And we helping do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain." [21] We must correspond with it and cooperate generously with it. Were this elementary truth put into practice daily, it would lead to sanctity.

Without a doubt, God takes the first step toward us by His prevenient grace, then He helps us to consent to it. He accompanies us in all our ways and difficulties, even to the moment of death. On our part, we should not forget that, instead of resisting His prevenient graces, we should be faithful to them. How can we do this? First of all, we can do so by joyfully welcoming the first illuminations of grace, then by following its inspirations with docility in spite of obstacles, and finally by putting these inspirations into practice no matter what the cost. Then we shall cooperate in the work of God, and our action will be the fruit of His grace and of our free will. It will be entirely from God as First Cause, and entirely from us as second cause.

The first grace of light, which efficaciously produces a good thought in us, is sufficient in relation to a voluntary good consent, in this sense, that it gives us, not this act, but the power to produce it. However, if we resist this good thought, we deprive ourselves of the actual grace which would have efficaciously led us to a good consent. Resistance falls on sufficient grace like hail on a tree in bloom which promised much fruit; the flowers are destroyed and the fruit will not form. Efficacious grace is offered us in sufficient grace, as the fruit is in the flower; moreover, the flower must not be destroyed if rhe fruit is to be given to us. If we do not resist suf-

[20] *Sermon* 15, chap. i.
[21] See II Cor. 6: i.

ficient grace, actual efficacious grace is given us, and by it we advance surely in the way of salvation. Sufficient grace thus leaves us without excuse before God, and efficacious grace does not allow us to glory in ourselves; with it we advance humbly and generously.[22]

We should not resist the divine prevenient graces of Him who has given us sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the gifts, and who daily draws us to Himself. We should not be content with living a mediocre life and with producing only imperfect fruits, since our Savior came that we "may have life, and may have it more abundantly," [23] and that from within us "shall flow rivers of living water," [24] that we may eternally enjoy His beatitude. God is magnanimous; let us, too, be so.

22 Herein lies the great mystery of grace; its two aspects, which are to be harmonized, may be expressed in the following manner: this mystery contains a striking light and shade: the light is expressed in two principles; the shade is their intimate harmonization. On the one hand, God never commands the impossible (that would be neither just nor merciful); but out of love, He makes the duties to be performed really possible for all. No adult is deprived of the grace necessary for salvation unless he refuses it by resisting the divine call, as did the bad thief dying beside the Savior. On the other hand, "since the love of God for us is the cause of all good, no one would be better than another if he were not more greatly loved by God," as St. Thomas says (la, q.20, a.3). In this sense, Christ said: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5); and in speaking of the elect. He added: "No one can snatch them out of the hand of the Father" (John 10:29). St. Paul also asks: "For who distinguisheth thee? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received?" (I Cor. 4:7.) What more profound lesson in humility could be taught?

As a council of the Middle Ages states: "If some are saved, it is by the gift of the Savior; if others are lost, it is through their own fault." (Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 318.) Resistance to grace is an evil which can come only from us; non-resistance is a good which springs from the Source of all good. These formulas reconcile the two aspects of the mystery, and the principles that we have just recalled are incontestable. Each of these two principles taken separately is absolutely certain. That salvation is possible to all is a principle as certain as that "no one would be better than another if he were not more loved by God." "What have we that we have not received?" But how can these two incontestable principles be intimately reconciled? No created intellect can see this harmony before receiving the beatific vision. In fact, were we to sec it, we would see how infinite mercy, infinite justice, and sovereign liberty harmonize in the eminence of the Deity. We explained this problem in its relations to the spiritual life at greater length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 80-113; *Providence* (English translation), pp. 334-40; *Predestination* (English translation), pp. 221 ff., 335 ff.

28 John 10:10.

18 Ibid., 7:38.

This fidelity is required, first of all, that we may preserve the life of grace by avoiding mortal sin. The life of grace is incomparably more precious than that of the body, than the power to perform miracles; it is of such worth that our Savior delivered Himself up to death in order to restore it to us. If it were given to us to contemplate unveiled the amazing splendor of sanctifying grace, we should be ravished. Moreover, fidelity is required to merit and obtain the increase of the life of grace, which ought to grow until our entrance into heaven, since we are travelers on the road to eternity and since we advance toward our goal by growing in the love of God. Thence comes the necessity of sanctifying each and every one of our acts, even the most ordinary, by accomplishing them with purity of intention, for a supernatural motive, and in union with our Lord. If we were thus faithful from morning until evening, each of our days would contain hundreds of meritorious acts, hundreds of acts of love of God and of neighbor, made on every pleasant or painful occasion, and when evening came, our union with God would be more intimate and much stronger. It has often been said that to sanctify ourselves there is no more practical and more efficacious means that is more within the reach of all, than thus to supernaturalize each of our acts by offering them in union with our Lord, to God for His glory and the good of souls.[25]

[25] Some have thought that the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost diminishes the liberty of our act and that the act immediately caused by it, is not meritorious. This special inspiration no more diminishes our liberty than the absolute impeccability of Christ diminished His perfect liberty of obedience to the precepts of His Father. He could not disobey; He obeyed infallibly, but freely, the precept to die, for He preserved the indifference of judgment and of choice in the face of the painful death of the cross, which did not invincibly attract His will, as did the immediate vision of the divine goodness. We have explained this at length elsewhere *(Le Sauveur,* pp. 204-18).

CHAPTER IV

The Blessed Trinity Present in Us, Uncreated Source of Our Interior Life

SINCE we have treated of the life of grace, of the spiritual organism of the infused virtues and the gifts, we may fittingly consider the uncreated Source of our interior life, that is, the Blessed Trinity present in all just souls on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven. We shall see, first of all, what divine revelation, contained in Scripture, tells us about this consoling mystery. We shall then briefly consider the testimony of tradition, and finally we shall see the exact ideas offered by theology, particularly by St. Thomas Aquinas,[1] and the spiritual consequences of this doctrine.

The Testimony of Scripture

Scripture teaches us that God is present in every creature by a general presence, often called the presence of immensity. We read in particular in Ps. 138:7: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present." This is what made St. Paul say, when preaching to the Athenians: "God, who made the world, . . . being Lord of heaven and earth, . . . though He be not far from everyone of us: for in Him we live and move and are."[2] God, in fact, sees all, preserves all things in existence, and inclines every creature to the action which is suitable for him.

1 This subject has been well treated by Father Froget, O.P., in *De l'habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les âmes justes* (3rd ed. Paris: Lethielleux, 1900). More recently, the subject was treated by Father Gardeil, O.P., *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1927), II, 6-60. We have also dealt at length with this subject in *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* I, 163-206; II, 657-86.

2 Acts 17:24, 27 f.

He is like the radiant source from which the life of creation springs, and also the central force that draws everything to itself: "O God, sustaining force of creation, remaining in Thyself unmoved."

Holy Scripture does not, however, speak only of this general presence of God in all things; it also speaks of a special presence of God in the just. We read, in fact, even in the Old Testament: "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins." [3] Would only created grace or the created gift of wisdom dwell in the just soul? Christ's words bring us a new light and show us that it is the divine persons Themselves who come and dwell in us: "If anyone love Me," He says, "he will keep My word. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." [4] These words should be noted: "We will come." Who will come? Would it be only created effects: sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the gifts? No indeed; Those who come are Those who love: the divine persons, the Father and the Son, from whom the Holy Ghost is never separated, that Spirit of Love promised, moreover, by our Lord and visibly sent on Pentecost. "We will come to him," to the just soul who loves God, and "We will come" not only in a transitory, passing manner, but "We will make our abode with him," that is to say, *We* will dwell in him as long as he remains just, or in the state of grace, as long as he preserves charity. Such were our Lord's own words.

These words are confirmed by those that promise the Holy Ghost: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him. But you shall know Him; because He shall abide with you and shall be in you. . . . He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [5] These words were not only addressed to the apostles; they were verified in them on Pentecost, which is renewed for us by confirmation. This testimony of our Savior is clear, and it states exactly and in an admirable manner what we read in the Book of Wisdom (1:4). It is indeed the three divine persons who come and dwell in the souls of the just. Thus the apostles understood it. St. John writes: "God is char-

[3] Wisd. 1:4.
[4] John 14:23.
[5] John 14:16 f., *16.*

ity: and he that abideth in charity, abidcth in God, and God in him." [6] He possesses God in his heart; but still more God possesses him and holds him, preserving not only his natural existence, but the life of grace and charity in him. St. Paul speaks in like manner: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." [7] We have received not only created charity, but the Holy Ghost Himself who has been given to us. St. Paul speaks of Him especially, because charity likens us more to the Holy Ghost, who is personal love, than to the Father and to the Son. They are also in us, according to the testimony of Christ, but we will be made perfectly like Them only when we receive the light of glory, which will imprint in us the resemblance to the \Vord, who is the splendor of the Father. On several different occasions St. Paul refers to this consoling doctrine: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" [8] "Or know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body." [9] Scripture thus teaches explicitly that the three divine persons dwell in every just soul, in every soul in the state of grace.

The Testimony of Tradition

Tradition, moreover, shows by the voice of the first martyrs, by that of the fathers, by the official teaching of the Church, that the words of Scripture must be understood in this way.[10]

At the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch declares in his letters that true Christians bear God in themselves; he calls them "theophoroi" or God-bearers. This doctrine was wide-

6 See I John 4:16.
7 Rom. 5:5.
8 See I Cor. 3:16.
8 *Ibid.,* 6:19 f.

10 In the present case, we see clearly the importance of essentially divine tradition, which transmits to us through the legitimate shepherds of the Church, an orally revealed doctrine, whether it was later established in Scripture or not. All the organs of divine tradition may be invoked in the present case: the solemn teaching authority of the Church, and also its ordinary teaching authority expressed by the morally unanimous preaching of the bishops, by the consent of the fathers and of theologians, and by the Christian sense of the faithful.

spread in the primitive Church: the martyrs proclaimed it before their judges. St. Lucy of Syracuse answered Paschasius:

"Words cannot fail those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them."

"Is the Holy Ghost in you?"

"Yes, all those who lead a chaste and pious life are the temples of the Holy Ghost."

Among the Greek fathers, St. Athanasius says that the three divine persons are in us.[11] St. Basil declares that the Holy Ghost, by His presence, makes us more and more spiritual and like to the image of the only Son.[12] St. Cyril of Alexandria also speaks of this intimate union between the just soul and the Holy Ghost.[13] Among the Latin fathers, St. Ambrose teaches that we receive Him in baptism and even more in confirmation.[14] St. Augustine shows that, according to the testimony of the early fathers, not only grace was given us, but God Himself, the Holy Ghost and His seven gifts.[15]

This revealed doctrine is finally brought home to us by the official teaching of the Church. In the Credo of St. Epiphanius, which adults were obliged to recite before receiving baptism, we read: "The Holy Spirit who . . . spoke in the apostles and dwells in the saints."[10] The Council of Trent declares also: "The efficient cause [of our justification] is the merciful God, who washes and sanctifies gratuitously, signing and anointing with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance" (Eph. i: 13).[17]

The official teaching of the Church on this point has been stated even more precisely in our times by Leo XIII in his encyclical on the Holy Ghost, *Divinum illud munus* (May 9, 1897), in which the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the souls of the just is thus described:

> It is well to recall the explanation given by the Doctors of the Church of the words of Holy Scripture. They say that God is present and exists in all things "by His power in so far as all things are subject to His power; by His presence, inasmuch as all things are naked and open to

[11] *Ep. I ad Serap.,* 31; *PG,* XXVI, 601.
[12] *De Spiritu Sancto,* chap. 9, nos. 22 ff.; chap. 18, no. 47.
[13] *Dialog.,* VII, *PG,* LXXV, 1085.
[14] *De Spiritu Sancto,* I, chaps. 5-6.
[10] *De fide et symbolo,* chap. 9, and *De Trinitate,* XV, chap. 27.
[10] Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 13.
[17] Council of Trent, Scss. VI, chap. 7; Denzinger, no. 799.

His eyes; by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being" (St. Thomas, Ia, q. 8, a. 3). But God is in man, not only as in inanimate things, but because He is more fully known and loved by him, since even by nature we spontaneously love, desire, and seek after the good. Moreover, God by grace resides in the just soul as in a temple, in a most intimate and peculiar manner. From this proceeds that union of affection by which the soul adheres most closely to God, more so than the friend is united to his most loving and beloved friend, and enjoys God in all fullness and sweetness.

Now this wonderful union, which is properly called "indwelling," differing only in degree or state from that with which God beatifies the saints in heaven, although it is most certainly produced by the presence of the whole Blessed Trinity—"We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23)—nevertheless is attributed in a peculiar manner to the Holy Ghost. For, whilst traces of divine power and wisdom appear even in the wicked man, charity, which, as it were, is the special mark of the Holy Ghost, is shared in only by the just. . . . Wherefore the Apostle, when calling us the temple of God, does not expressly mention the Father, or the Son, but the Holy Ghost: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God?" (I Cor. 6:19.)

The fullness of divine gifts is in many ways a consequence of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the just. . . . Among these gifts are those secret warnings and invitations which from time to time are excited in our minds and hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Without these there is no beginning of a good life, no progress, no arriving at eternal salvation.

Such is, in substance, the testimony of tradition expressed by the teaching authority of the Church under its different forms. We shall now see what theology adds in order to give us, in addition, a certain understanding of this revealed mystery. We shall follow the teaching of St. Thomas on this subject.

The Theological Explanation of This Mystery

Different explanations of this mystery have been proposed.[18] Among these different points of view, that of St. Thomas, preserved by Leo XIII in his encyclical on the Holy Ghost, seems the truest.

** We set forth these explanations elsewhere *(L'cmiour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* I. 167-205), and we compared that of the Angelic Doctor, as understood by John of St. Thomas, and in more recent years by Father Gardeil,

It contains, moreover, in the form of a superior synthesis, all that is positive in the other explanations.[10] Much has been written in recent times on this subject. A return to the very letter of the principal article of St. Thomas, which has at times been somewhat forgotten, is essential. Presupposing the general presence of God which preserves all things in existence, the common Doctor of the Church says, in fact: "The divine Person is fittingly sent, in the sense that He exists newly in anyone; and He is given as possessed by anyone; and neither of these is otherwise than by sanctifying grace."

O.P., with those of Vasquez and Suarez. It will be sufficient here to review these opinions briefly.

Vasquez reduces every real presence of God in us to the general presence of immensity, according to which God is present in all things which He preserves in existence. As an object known and loved, God is not really present in the just soul; He is, as it were, only represented there in the manner of an absent but very much loved person.

Suarez, on the contrary, maintains that, even if God were not already present in the just by the general presence of immensity, He would become really and substantially present in them by reason of the charity which unites them to Him. This opinion runs counter to the following strong objection: Although we love the humanity of the Savior and the Blessed Virgin by charity, it does not follow that they are really present in us, that they dwell in our souls. Of itself, charity constitutes an affective union and makes us desire real union; but how could it constitute this union?

John of St. Thomas *(hi lain,* q.43, a.3, disp. XVII, nos. 8-10) and Father Gardeil (op. *cit.,* II, 7-60) have shown that the thought of St. Thomas towers above the mutually contradictory conceptions of Vasquez and of Suarez. According to the Angelic Doctor, contrary to what Suarez says, the special presence of the Blessed Trinity in the just man presupposes the general presence of immensity; but (and this is what Vasquez did not see) by sanctifying grace God is rendered really present in a new manner as an experimentally knowable object which the just soul can enjoy. He is not there only as a very much loved person who is absent, but He is really there, and at times He makes Himself felt by us. If, by an impossibility, God were not already in the just as the preserving cause of his natural being, He would, as a result, become specially present in him as the producing and preserving cause of grace and charity, and as a quasi-experimentally knowable object, and, from time to time, as an object known and loved.

[19] The systems, which do not attain to a superior synthesis, are generally true in what they affirm, and false in what they deny. What is true in each one of them is found again in the superior synthesis when the mind has discovered the eminent principle which permits the harmonization of the different aspects of the problem. In the present case, Vasquez seems to be wrong in denying that the special presence is that of an experimentally knowable object really present; and Suarez seems, indeed, to err in denying that this special presence presupposes the general presence of immensity by which God preserves all things in existence.

For God is in all things by His essence, power, and presence, according to His one common mode, as the cause existing in the effects which participate in His goodness. Above and beyond this common mode, however, there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its own operation of (supernatural) knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode, God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in His own temple. So no other effect can be put down as the reason why the divine Person is in the rational creature in a new mode, except sanctifying grace. . . . Again, we are said to possess only what we can freely use or enjoy: but to have the power of enjoying the divine Person can only be according to sanctifying grace.[20]

Without sanctifying grace and charity, God does not, in fact, dwell in us. It is not sufficient to know Him by a natural philosophical knowledge, or even by the supernatural knowledge of imperfect faith united to hope, as the believer in the state of mortal sin knows Him. (God is, so to speak, distant from a believer who is turned away from Him.) We must be able to know Him by living faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost connected with charity. This last knowledge, being quasi-experimental, attains God not as a distant and simply represented reality, but as a present, possessed reality which we can enjoy even now. This is evidently what St. Thomas means in the text quoted.[21] It is a question, he says, of a knowledge which attains God Himself, and permits us to possess Him and to enjoy Him. That the divine persons may dwell in us, we must be able to know Them in a quasi-experimental and loving manner, based on infused charity, which gives us a connaturality or sympathy with the intimate life of God.[22] That the Blessed Trinity may dwell in us, this quasi-experimental knowledge need not, however,

20 See Ia, q.43, a.3.

21 *Ibid.,* a. i, c. and ad 1 uni, 2 urn.

22 St. Thomas had already stated this in his *Commentary on the Sentences,* I dist., 14, q.2, a. z ad 3um. "Non qualiscumque cognitio sufficit ad rationem missionis, sed solum illa quae accipitur ex aliquo dono appropriato personae, per quod efficitur in nobis conjunctio ad Deum, secundum modum proprium illius personae, scilicet per amorem, quando Spiritus Sanctus datur, unde cognitio ista est quasi-experimentalis" *(ibid.,* ad zum). This quasi-experimental knowledge of God, based on charity, which gives us a connaturality with divine things, proceeds especially from the gift of wisdom, as St. Thomas says (Ha Ilae, q.45, a. 2).

be actual; it suffices that we be able to have it by the grace of the virtues and gifts. Thus the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity endures in the just man even during sleep and as long as he remains in the state of grace.[23] From time to time, however, God may make Himself felt by us as the soul of our soul, the life of our life. This is what St. Paul declares in his epistle to the Romans (8:15 f.): "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." In his commentary on this epistle, St. Thomas says: "The Holy Spirit gives this testimony to our spirit by the effect of filial love which He produces in us."[24] For this reason the disciples of Emmaus exclaimed after Jesus disappeared: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?"[25]

In giving the explanation we have just quoted, St. Thomas simply shows us the profound meaning of the words of Christ that we cited previously: "If anyone love Me, he will keep My word. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him."[26] "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."[27] According to this teaching, the Blessed Trinity dwells, in a sense, more perfectly in the just soul than the body of the Savior does in a consecrated host. Christ is, indeed, really and substantially present under the Eucharistic species, but these species of bread do not know and do not love. The Blessed Trinity dwells in the just soul as in a living temple which knows and loves in varying degrees. It dwells in the souls of the blessed who contemplate It unveiled, especially in the most holy soul of the Savior, to which the Word is personally united. And even here on earth, in the penumbra of faith, the Blessed Trinity, without our seeing It, dwells in us in order to vivify us more and

[23] Thus our soul is always present to itself, as an experimentally knowable object, without always being actually known: for example, in deep sleep.

[24] See Ia IIae, q. 112, a. 5: "Whoever receives it (grace) knows, by experiencing a certain sweetness, which is not experienced by one who does not receive it." It is a sign permitting us to conjecture and to have a moral certitude that we are in the state of grace.

[26] Luke 24:32.

[20] John 14:23.

[27] *Ibid.,* 26.

more, up to the moment of our entrance into glory where It will appear to us.

This intimate presence of the Blessed Trinity in us does not dispense us, certainly, from approaching the Eucharistic table or from praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, for the Blessed Trinity dwells far more intimately in the holy soul of the Savior, personally united to the Word, than in us. If we draw profit from approaching a saint who is entirely possessed by God, like a holy Curé of Ars, how much more will we profit from approaching our Savior? We can say to Him: "Come, even with Thy cross, and take more complete possession of us. Grant that the prayer, 'Thou in us and we in Thee' may be more fully realized." Let us also think of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul of the Blessed Virgin both here on earth and in heaven.

Spiritual Consequences of This Doctrine

A consequence of primary importance springs from these considerations. If the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in us cannot be conceived unless the just man can have a "quasi-experimental knowledge" of God present in him, what follows? That this knowledge, far from being something essentially extraordinary, like visions, revelations, or the stigmata, is in the normal way of sanctity.[28] This quasi-experimental knowledge of God present in us springs from faith illumined by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, which are connected with charity; whence it follows that this knowledge ought normally to grow with the progress of charity, either under a clearly contemplative form, or under a form more directly oriented toward action. Farther on, we shall also declare that infused contemplation, in which this quasi-experience develops, begins, according to St. John of the Cross, with the illuminative way and develops in the unitive way.[29] This quasi-experimental knowledge

[28] Father Gardeil, O.P., holds the same opinion as we do on this subject. He says *(op. cit.,* II, 89): "In this fourth part, we will devote our best effort to showing that the mystical experience is the final flowering of the life of the Christian in the state of grace"; and (p. 368): "Mystical knowledge, supreme but normal flowering of the state of grace."

[28] St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 14: "The way of . . . proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul."

of God, of His goodness, will grow with the knowledge of our nothingness and wretchedness, according to the divine words spoken to St. Catherine of Siena: "I am who am; thou art she who is not."

It also follows that, when our charity increases notably, the divine persons are sent anew, says St. Thomas,[30] for They become more intimately present in us according to a new mode or degree of intimacy. This is true, for example, at the time of the second conversion, which marks the entrance into the illuminative way.

Finally, They are in us not only as an object of supernatural knowledge and love, but as principles of supernatural operations. Christ Himself said: "My Father worketh until now; and I work," especially in the intimacy of the heart, in the center of the soul.

We should, moreover, remember in a practical way that ordinarily God communicates Himself to His creature only in the measure of the creature's dispositions. When these become more pure, the divine persons also become more intimately present and active. Then God belongs to us and we to Him, and we desire above all to make progress in His love. "This doctrine of the invisible missions of the divine persons in us is one of the most powerful motives for spiritual advancement," says Father Chardon, "because it keeps the soul ever on the alert in regard to its progress, awake to produce incessantly ever stronger and more fervent acts of all the virtues, that, growing in grace, this new growth may bring God anew to it . . . for a union . . . which is characterized by greater intimacy, purity, and vigor." [31]

Our Duties Toward the Divine Guest

In Proverbs we read: "My son, give Me thy heart." [32] And in the Apocalypse we are told: "Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." [33] The soul of a just man is like a heaven that is still obscure, since the Blessed Trinity is in him, and some day he will see It there unveiled.

Our duties toward the interior Guest may be summed up in the following suggestions: that we think often of Him and tell our-

80 See Ia, q.43, a.6 ad num.
81 *La croix de Jésus,* original edition, p. 457; 3rd conference, chap. 4.
82 Prov. 23:26.
88 Apoc. 3:30.

selves that God lives in us; that we consecrate our day, our hour, to the divine persons by saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"; that we remember that the interior Guest is for us the source of light, consolation, and strength; that we pray to Him as Christ suggests: "Pray to thy Father in secret (in thy soul): and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee";[34] that we adore the interior Guest saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord"; that we believe in Him; that we trust absolutely in Him, and love Him with an increasingly pure, generous, and strong love; that we love Him by imitating Him, especially by goodness, according to the words of our Savior: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect";[35] "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us."[36]

As we shall see more clearly in the following pages, all this leads us to think that far from being essentially extraordinary, the mystical life alone, which is characterized by the reality of the quasi-experimental knowledge of God present in us, is completely normal. Only the saints, all of whom live this sort of life, are fully in order. Before experiencing this intimate union with God present in us, we are somewhat like souls still half-asleep, souls not yet spiritually awakened. Our knowledge of the consoling mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity is still too superficial and bookish, and yet overflowing life is offered to us.

Before entering into the intimacy of union with God, our adoration and love of Him are not what they ought to be, and frequently we consider the "one thing necessary" as if it were not the most important thing for us. Likewise we have not yet become profoundly cognizant of the gift that has been given us in the Eucharist, and we have only a superficial knowledge of the nature of the mystical body of Christ.

The Floly Ghost is the soul of the mystical body, of which Christ is the head. As in our body the soul is entirely in the whole body and entirely in each part, and exercises its superior functions in the head, so the Holy Ghost is entirely in all the mystical body, entirely in each just soul, and exercises His highest functions in the holy

[34] Matt. *6:6.*
[35] *Ibid.,* 5:48.
[36] John 17:11.

soul of the Savior, and through it on us. The vital principle which thus constitutes the unity of the mystical body is singularly more unitive than the soul which unifies our body, than the spirit of a family or of a nation. The spirit of a family is a certain manner of seeing, judging, feeling, loving, willing, and acting. The spirit of the mystical body is infinitely more unifying; it is the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier, source of all graces, source of living water springing up into eternal life. The stream of grace, which comes from the Holy Ghost, unceasingly reascends toward God under the form of adoration, prayer, merit, and sacrifice; it is the elevation toward God, the prelude of the life of heaven. Such are the supernatural realities of which we should become increasingly more conscious. Only in the mystical life does the soul truly awaken completely, and have that lively, profound, radiating consciousness of the gift of God that is necessary if the soul is to correspond fully with the love of God for us.

CHAPTER V

The Influence of Christ the Redeemei on His Mystical Body

THE BLESSED TRINITY which dwells in every just soul is, as we have seen, the uncreated source of our interior life. But our sanctification depends also on the constant influence of Christ the Redeemer, who incessantly communicates to us, through the sacraments and outside of them, the graces He merited for us during His earthly life, and especially during His passion. Therefore it is fitting that we speak here of this sanctifying influence in general, and that we consider how it is exercised in particular by the greatest of all sacraments, the Eucharist.[1]

How the Savior Communicates to Us the Graces Which He Formerly Merited for Us

As the living instrument ever united to the divinity, source of all grace, Christ communicates to us the graces which he formerly merited for us. St. John says: "Of His fullness we all have received."[2]

Christ Himself tells this to us in a most expressive, symbolical manner: "I am the true vine; you the branches. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. . . . If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask

[1] Cf. Emile Mersch, S.J., *Le corps mystique du Christ.* Etude de théologie historique, 1936; *Morale et corps mystique,* 1937. Ernest Mura, *Le corps mystique du Christ, sa nature et sa vie divine d'après saint Paul et la théologie,* 2nd ed., 1936.

[2] John 1:16. Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, q.8: "Of the Grace of Christ, as He Is the Head of the Church" (in eight articles). *Commentum in Joannem, 15:* 1-7: "I am the vine; you the branches."

whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." [3] Elsewhere Jesus likewise says: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [4] By this He means that, if we ask especially for a living, more intimate, and profound knowledge of Him (which is given by the Holy Ghost) and for a purer and stronger love of Him, we shall be heard. Who would dare to say that Christ is not speaking here of the prayer by which His members ask for the infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation? "In this," He adds, "is My Father glorified; that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples."

This beautiful figure of the vine and the branches is most expressive. St. Paul reverts to it under the form of the olive tree in which we are ingrafted.[6] He also gives another that is no less striking. Christ, he says, is like the head which communicates to the members the vital influx, which has its principle in the soul. The Church is the mystical body of Christ; Christians are the members of this body. He often repeats this statement: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." [7] "But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth . . . maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity." [7] "And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body." [8]

According to this doctrine, the Savior communicates to us the vital influx of grace (of which the source is God Himself considered in His divine nature), as the head communicates to the members the vital influx, the principle of which is in the soul. Clearly to understand this teaching, we must distinguish between the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Jesus, as the Word, dwells, as do the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the center, in the depths of our soul. He is closer to it than it is to itself; He preserves its natural and its supernatural life. By operating grace, Fie moves it to the deepest, most

[3] John 15: 1-7.
[4] Matt. 6:33.
[6] Rom. 11:17.
[7] See I Cor. 12:27.
[7] Eph. 4:15 f.
[8] Col. 3:15.

secret acts which it could not produce by itself.[8] The humanity of our Savior, says St. Thomas,[10] is the instrument ever united to the divinity through which all graces are communicated to us. Just as in the sacraments, the water of baptism, for example, and the sacramental formula are the physical, instrumental cause of sacramental grace, in the sense that God, by making use of this water and this formula, communicates to them a transitory divine power to produce this grace, so also the humanity of the Savior and especially the acts of His holy soul are the physical, instrumental cause of all the graces we receive, either through the sacraments or outside of them.[11]

The sacred humanity of the Savior does not dwell in our soul. His body could not be in our soul; it is only in heaven (as in its natural place) and sacramentally in the Eucharist. But, although the humanity of Christ does not dwell in us, the just soul is continually under its influence, since by its intermediary every grace is communicated to us, just as in our body the head communicates the vital influx to the members. Since at every waiting moment we have some duty to accomplish, Christ's humanity communicates to us from minute to minute the actual grace of the present moment, as the air we breathe continually enters our lungs. God, the Author of grace, makes use of Christ's humanity to communicate grace to us, as a great artist uses an instrument to transmit his musical thought to us, or as a great thinker uses his own style, his more or less rich language, to express himself. Thus the seven sacraments are like the strings of a lyre from which God alone can, by His divine touch, draw music. The Savior's humanity is a conscious, free, and superior instrument, ever united to the divinity in order to communicate to us all the graces that we receive and that Christ merited for us on the cross. Thus every illumination of the intellect, every grace of attraction, of consolation, or of strength, whether felt or not, actually come to us from the sacred humanity. For each of our salutary acts, it is a continual influence far more profound

8 See Ia Hae, q. 111, a. 2.

10 See IIIa, q.43, a.2; q.48, a.6.

11 The act of charity ever living in the heart of Christ can always be the physical, instrumental cause of the graces that we receive. It suffices, moreover, that the instrument convey the influx of the principal cause, as the transmitter passes on the human word.

than that exercised over a child by the best of mothers when she teaches him to pray.

Outside the sacraments, this activity of the Savior transmits the lights of faith to unbelievers who do not resist it; to sinners, the grace of attrition, which invites them to approach the sacrament of penance. Especially through the Eucharist His influence is exercised, for the Eucharist is the most perfect of the sacraments, containing not only grace but the Author of grace; and it is a sacrifice of infinite value. This point must be insisted on here in speaking of the bases or the sources of the interior life.

The Sanctifying Influence of the Savior Through the Eucharist

The very terms that Christ used in the Gospel to describe this influence may be fittingly used here.

To draw greater spiritual profit from this influence and to thank the Lord for it, we may recall how, through love for our souls, Christ first promised the Eucharist; how Ele gave it to us at the Last Supper by instituting the priesthood; how He renews it every day in the Sacrifice of the Mass; how He wishes to remain among us by assuring the continuity of His real presence; and finally, how He gives Himself to us in daily Communion, continuing to do so until we last receive Him as holy viaticum. All these acts of divine generosity spring from one and the same love and are all ordained to our progressive sanctification. They deserve a special thanksgiving. Such is the true meaning of the devotion to the Eucharistic heart of Jesus. His heart is called "Eucharistic" because it gave us the Eucharist and still continues to do so. As people say that the air is healthful when it maintains or restores health, the heart of our Savior is called "Eucharistic" because it has given us the greatest of the sacraments, in which it is itself really and substantially present as the radiant source of ever new graces.

The words of the promise of the Eucharist, recorded by St. John (6:26-59), show us best of all what this vivifying influence of the Savior on us should be, and how we ought to receive it. First of all, Christ promised a heavenly bread. After the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, He said: "Labor not for the meat which per-

isheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you. . . . My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." [12] Then a number of those who had eaten their fill after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves exclaimed: "Lord, give us always this bread." Jesus answered them: "I am the bread of life. . . . You also have seen Me, and you believe not." [18] The Jews murmured, says St. John,[14] because He had said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." Jesus replied: "Murmur not among yourselves. . . . Amen, amen I say unto you: he that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world. . . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed. . . . The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." [18] Many did not believe and withdrew. "Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." [16] This promise of the Eucharist makes us glimpse all that this sacrament ought to produce in us, whether beginners, proficients, or the perfect.

The institution of the Eucharist shows us the import of this promise. It is thus related in St. Matthew, and almost in the same terms in St. Mark, St. Luke, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is My body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission

12 John *6:* 27, 32 f.
18 Ibid., 34-36.
14 Ibid., 41.
18 Ibid., 43, 47-52, 55 f., 64.
>« Ibid., 68 f.

of sins." [17] The words of the promise are illumined. Peter was rewarded for having said with faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." At the Last Supper, Christ's word was more efficacious than ever; it was a transubstantiating word by which He changed the substance of bread into that of His own body that He might remain sacramentally among us. At the same moment He instituted the priesthood to perpetuate sacramentally, by means of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the cross until the end of time. Christ says, in fact, as St. Luke relates,[18] and as St. Paul states: "This do for the commemoration of Me." [18] The apostles then received the power to consecrate, to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, which perpetuates in substance the sacrifice of the cross in order to apply its fruits, its merits, and its satisfactions to us until the end of the world. In the Mass, the principal priest is Christ, who continues to offer Himself sacramentally. As St. Paul says, He is "always living to make intercession for us." [20] He does this especially in the Holy Sacrifice. By reason of the principal priest and of the victim offered, of the precious blood sacramentally shed, this sacrifice has an infinite value. At the same time, Christ offers to His Father our adoration, our supplication, our reparation, our thanksgiving, all the salutary acts of His mystical body.

Christ's love did not give us the Eucharist only once, but gives it to us daily. He might have willed that Mass should be celebrated only once or twice a year in some great sanctuary to which people would come from afar. On the contrary, not only one Mass, but numbers of them are celebrated continually, at every minute of the day, over the surface of the earth. Thus He grants to His Church the graces it needs at the various moments of its history. In the catacombs, later during the great barbarian invasions, in the iron centuries of the Middle Ages, the Mass was the source of ever new graces; it is still so today that it may give us the strength to resist the great dangers threatening us.

Moreover, Christ daily returns really and substantially among us, not only for an hour during the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, but to remain continually with us in the tabernacle, to be there "the companion of our exile, patiently waiting for us, eager to hear

17 Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25.
18 Luke 22:19.
18 Sec I Cor. 11:24!.
«° Hcb. 7:25.

and grant our prayers" and unceasingly to offer there to His Father adoration of infinite value.

Finally, Communion is the consummation of the gift of self. Goodness is essentially diffusive, it attracts, it gives itself to vivify us and to enrich us spiritually. This is especially true of the radiating goodness of God and of His Christ. In Communion, the Savior draws us and gives Himself, not only to humanity in general, but to each one of us if we wish it, and in an ever more intimate manner if we are faithful. He gives Himself, not that we should assimilate Him, for this would reduce Him to our level; but that we may be made more like to Him. "The bread, which we break," says St. Paul, "is it nor the partaking of the body of the Lord?" [21] It is Life itself that we receive.

Communion ought to incorporate us more and more into Christ, by increasing our humility, faith, confidence, and especially our charity, in order to make our hearts like to that of the Savior who died out of love for us. In this sense, each of our Communions should be substantially more fervent than the preceding one, that is, as far as fervor of the will is concerned; for each Communion ought not only to preserve but to increase the love of God in us, and thus dispose us to receive our Lord on the following day with not only an equal but a greater fervor of will, although it may be otherwise as regards sensible fervor, which is accidental.[22] There should be, as it were, an accelerated progress toward God, which recalls the acceleration of bodies as they gravitate toward the center which attracts them. As a stone falls more rapidly as it approaches the earth which attracts it, souls should advance more rapidly toward God as they draw near Him and are more attracted by Him. We find this idea expressed in many forms in the liturgy, and especially in the *Adoro Te* of St. Thomas Aquinas:

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas.

I adore Thee devoutly, O hidden Deity, who art truly hidden beneath these figures; my heart submits entirely to Thee, and faints in contemplating Thee.

Fac me tibi semper magis credere,
In te spem habere, te diligere.

21 See 1 Cor. 10: t6.

22 An excellent Communion may be made in great sensible aridity, just as the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane was excellent.

Make me believe Thee ever more and more, hope in Thee, and love Thee.

O memoriale mortis Domini,
Panis vivus, vitam praestans homini:
Praesta meae menti de te vivere,
Et te illi semper dulce sapere.

O memorial of the death of the Lord! Living bread giving life to man, grant that my soul may live by Thee and ever taste Thee with delight!

Pie pellicane, Jesu Domine,
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine.

Merciful Pelican, Jesus Lord, unclean I am, cleanse me in Thy blood, of which a single drop suffices to cleanse the entire world of all its sin.

fesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
Oro fiat illud, quod tam sitio:
Ut te revelata cemens facie,
Visu sim beatus tuae gloriae. Amen.

Jesus, whom I now behold beneath these veils, grant, I pray Thee, what so ardently I desire, that contemplating Thee face to face, the vision of Thy glory may make me blessed. Amen.

Should a soul thus live daily by the Savior in Mass and Communion, it would certainly arrive at great intimacy with Him, at the intimacy which is that of the mystical life. The gifts of the Holy Ghost would grow proportionately in it, and it would attain to an increasingly more penetrating and delightful contemplation of the great mystery of our altars, of the infinite value of the Mass, which is like an eminent spring of ever new graces to which all succeeding generations must come and drink, that they may have the strength to arrive at the end of their journey towards eternity. Thus the prophet Elias, overcome by fatigue, renewed his strength by eating the loaf that came down from heaven, and was able to walk even to Horeb, a figure of the summit of perfection.

Christ says to us in Communion, as He said to St. Augustine: "I am the bread of the strong. . . . Thou wilt not convert Me into thee, as the food of thy flesh; but thou shalt be converted into Me." [23] He who truly receives Christ in Holy Communion is more and more incorporated in Him, living by His thought and by His love. He

Confessions, Bk. VII, chap. io.

can say with St. Paul: "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain," for death is the entrance into unending life.

Progressive Incorporation in Christ and Sanctity

The doctrine of progressive incorporation in Christ will manifest its marvelous fecundity to the soul that wishes to live by it.[24]

First of all, in order to die to sin and its consequences, we will recall what St. Paul says: "We are buried together with Him (Christ) by baptism into death . . . that the body of sin may be destroyed." [25] "And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences";[26] this is the death to sin through baptism and penance. Then, in the light of faith and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Christian should put on "the new (man), him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him. . . . Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God," adds St. Paul, "holy, and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience. . . . But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." [27] This is the illuminative way of those who imitate Christ, who adopt His sentiments, the spirit of His mysteries, His passion,[28] His crucifixion,[29] His resurrection.[30] This is the way of the contemplation of the Savior's mysteries which all the saints have lived, even those of the active life, while recalling these words of the Apostle: "Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ." [31]

This road leads to continual union with the Savior, according to the sublime words of the Epistle to the Colossians (3:1-3): "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead (to the

24 On this point consult the works of Dom Marmion: *Christ, the Life of the Soul; Christ in His Mysteries; Christ, the Ideal of the Monk.*
25 Rom. 6:4,6.
26 Gal. 5:24.
27 Col. 3:10, 12, 14.
28 Rom. 8:7.
20 *Ibid.,* 6:5.
80 Col. 3:1.
81 Phil. 3:8.

world); and your life is hid with Christ in God." Then the peace of the Savior reigns in the soul that delights in saying to Him: "Lord, give Thyself to me, and give me to Thyself." In the saints, this union is like an almost uninterrupted communion. A glance, a movement of the soul toward Christ, tell Him our desires, present to Him our weakness, our good will, our disposition to be faithful to Him, and the thirst we have for Him. Such is the way of the loving contemplation of the great mysteries of Christ; it has its aridities and its joys. Those who experience it, see in it the normal prelude of the vision of heaven.

Some delude themselves, pretending to reach union with God without having continual recourse to our Lord. They will scarcely attain any but an abstract knowledge of God. They will not reach that delightful, living, quasi-experimental knowledge, as well as an elevated and practical knowledge, called wisdom, which makes the soul see God and His providence in the most insignificant things. The quietists fell into this error, holding that the sacred humanity of our Savior is a means useful only at the beginning of the spiritual life.[32] St. Teresa reacted especially against this point, reminding us that we should not of our own accord leave aside in prayer the consideration of Christ's humanity; it is the road which gently leads souls to His divinity.[33] We ought often to think of the immense spiritual riches of the holy soul of Christ, of His intellect, of His will, of His sensibility. By so doing we will come to a better understanding of the meaning of His words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He is the way according to His humanity; as God, He is the very essence of truth and life.

82Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* 1255.

83 St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle,* second mansion, chap. 1; sixth mansion, chap. 7; *Life,* chap. 22.

CHAPTER VI

The Influence of Mary Mediatrix

WHEN the bases of the interior life are considered, we cannot discuss the action of Christ, the universal Mediator, on His mystical body without also speaking of the influence of Mary Mediatrix. As we remarked, many persons delude themselves, maintaining that they reach union with God without having continual recourse to our Lord, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Another error would consist in wishing to go to our Lord without going first to Mary, whom the Church calls in a special feast the Mediatrix of all graces. Protestants have fallen into this last error. Without going as far as this deviation, there are Catholics who do not see clearly enough the necessity of having recourse to Mary that they may attain to intimacy with the Savior. Blessed Grignion de Montfort speaks even of "doctors who know the Mother of God only in a speculative, dry, sterile, and indifferent manner; who fear that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is abused, and that injury is done to our Lord by honoring too greatly His holy Mother. If they speak of devotion to Mary, it is less to recommend it than to destroy the abuses that have grown up around it." [1] They seem to believe that Mary is a hindrance to reaching divine union. According to Blessed Grignion, we lack humility if we neglect the mediators whom God has given us because of our frailty. Intimacy with our Lord in prayer will be greatly facilitated by a true and profound devotion to Mary.

To get a clear idea of this devotion, we shall consider what must be understood by universal mediation, and also how Mary is the mediatrix of all graces, as is affirmed by tradition and by the Office

[1] Blessed Grignion de Montfort, *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,* chap. 2, a. 1, § 1. See also *The Secret of Mary,* by the same author. It is a summary of the preceding treatise.

and Mass of Mary Mediatrix which are celebrated on May 31. Much has been written on the subject in recent years. We shall here consider this doctrine in its relation to the interior life.[2]

The Meaning of Universal Mediation

St. Thomas says: "Properly speaking, the office of a mediator is to join together those between whom he mediates: for extremes are united by an intermediary. Now to unite men to God perfectly belongs to Christ, through whom men are reconciled to God, according to II Cor. 5:19: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.' And, consequently, Christ alone is the perfect Mediator of God and men, inasmuch as, by His death, He reconciled the human race to God. Hence the Apostle, after saying, 'Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus,' added: 'Who gave Himself a redemption for all.' However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively, or ministerially."[3] In this sense, adds St. Thomas,[4] the prophets and priests of the Old Testament may be called mediators, and also the priests of the New Testament, as ministers of the true Mediator.

St. Thomas explains further how Christ as man is the Mediator: "Because, as man, He is distant both from God by nature, and from man by dignity of both grace and glory. Again, it belongs to Him, as man, to unite men to God, by communicating to men both precepts

2Cf. St. Bernard, *Serm. in Dominic, infra. Oct. Asstimpt.,* no. 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, 429). *Serm. in Nativ. B. V. Mariae De aquaeductu,* nos. 6-7 (PL, CLXXXIII, 440). *Epist. ad Canonicos Lugdunenses de Conceptione S. Mariae,* no. 2 (PL, CLXXXII, 333). St. Albert the Great, *Mariale sive Quaestiones super Evangelium: Missus est* (ed. A. Borgnet; Paris, 1890-99, XXXVII, q. 29). St. Bonaventure, *Sermones de B. V. Maria, De Annuntiatione,* serm. V (Quarrachi, 1901, IX, 679). St. Thomas, *In Salut, angel. expositio.* Bossuet, *Sermon sur la Sainte Vierge.* Terrien, S.J., *La Mère de Dieu et la Mère des hommes,* III. Hugon, O.P., *Marie pleine de grâce.* J. Bittremieux, *De mediatione universali B. Mariae V. quoad gratias,* 1926, Beyaert, Bruges. Léon Leloir, *La médiation mariale dans la théologie contemporaine,* 1933, *ibid.* P. R. Bernard, O.P., *Le mystère de Marie,* Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1933. This excellent book ought to be meditated upon. Sec also P. G. Friethoff, O.P., *De alma Socia Christi mediatoris,* Rome, 1936. J. V. Bainvel, S.J., *Le saint cœur de Marie,* 1919. P. Jorct, O.P., *Le Rosaire de Marie,* an annotated translation of the Encyclicals of Leo XIII on the Rosary, 1933.

3 See Illa, q.26, a. 1.

4 *Ibid.,* ad turn.

and gifts, and by offering satisfaction and prayers to God for men." 5 Christ satisfied and merited as man by a satisfaction and a merit which drew an infinite value from His divine personality. This mediation is twofold, both descending and ascending. It consists in giving to men the light and grace of God, and in offering to God, on behalf of men, the worship and reparation due to Him.

As has been said, there is nothing to prevent there being mediators below Christ, subordinated to Him as secondary mediators, such as were the prophets and priests of the Old Law for the chosen people. It may thus be asked whether Mary is the universal mediatrix for all men and for the distribution of all graces in general and in particular. St. Albert the Great speaks of the mediation of Mary as superior to that of the prophets when he says: "Mary was chosen by the Lord, not as a minister but to be associated in a very special and quite intimate manner in the work of the redemption of the human race: 'Faciamus ei adjutorium simile sibi.' " 0

Is not Mary in her quality as Mother of God completely designated to be the universal mediatrix? Is she not truly the intermediary between God and men? She is, indeed, much below God and Christ because she is a creature, but much above all men by the grace of her divine maternity, "which makes her attain the very frontiers of the divinity," 7 and by the plenitude of grace received at the moment of her immaculate conception, a plentitude which did not cease to grow until her death. Not only was Mary thus designated by her divine maternity for this function of mediatrix, but she received it in truth and exercised it. This is shown by tradition,8 which has given her the title of universal mediatrix in the proper sense of the word,9 although in a manner subordinated to Christ. This title is consecrated by the special feast which is celebrated in the universal Church. To have a clear understanding of the meaning and import of this title, we shall consider how it is becoming to Mary for two principal reasons: because she cooperated by satisfaction and merit in the sacrifice of the cross; and because she does not cease to intercede for us, to obtain for us, and to distribute to us all the graces that we receive. Such is the double mediation, ascending and de-

6 *Ibid.,* a. 2.
" *Mariale,* 42.
' Cajetan.
• Cf. J. Bittremieux, *op. cit.*
" Cf. G. Fricthoff, O.P., *Angelicttm* (October, 1933), pp. 469-77.

scending, which we ought to ponder in order daily to draw greater profit from it.

Mary Mediatrix by Her Cooperation in the Sacrifice of the Cross

During the entire course of her earthly life, the Blessed Virgin cooperated in the sacrifice of her Son. First of all, the free consent that she gave on Annunciation day was necessary for the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation, as if, says St. Thomas,[10] God had waited for the consent of humanity through the voice of Mary. By this free fiat, she cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross, since she gave us its Priest and Victim. She cooperated in it also by offering her Son in the Temple, as a most pure host, at the moment when the aged Simeon saw by prophetic light that this Child was the "salvation . . . prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." [11] More enlightened than Simeon, Mary offered her Son, and began to suffer deeply with Him when she heard the holy old man tell her that He would be a sigm which would be contradicted and that a sword would pierce her soul.

Mary cooperated in the sacrifice of Christ, especially at the foot of the cross, uniting herself to Him, more closely than can be expressed, by satisfaction or reparation, and by merit. Some saints, in particular the stigmatics, have been exceptionally united to the sufferings and merits of our Savior: for example, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena, and yet their share in His suffering cannot be compared with Mary's. Flow did Mary offer her Son? As He offered Himself. By a miracle, Jesus could easily have prevented the blows of His executioners from causing Flis death; He offered Himself voluntarily. "No man," He says, "taketh it (My life) away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself. And I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again." [12] Jesus renounced His right to life; He offered Himself wholly for our salvation. Of Mary, St. John says: "There stood by the cross

10 See Illa, q. 30, a. 1.
11 Luke 2:30-32.
12 John 10:18.

of Jesus, His mother," 13 surely very closely united to Him in His suffering and oblation. As Pope Benedict XV says: "She renounced her rights as a mother over her Son for the salvation of all men." 14 She accepted the martyrdom of Christ and offered it for us. In the measure of her love, she felt all the torments that He suffered in body and soul. More than anyone else, Mary endured the very suffering of the Savior; she suffered for sin in the degree of her love for God, whom sin offends; for her Son, whom sin crucified; for souls, which sin ravishes and kills. The Blessed Virgin's charity incomparably surpassed that of the greatest saints. She thus cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross by way of satisfaction or reparation, by offering to God for us, with great sorrow and most ardent love, the life of her most dear Son, whom she rightly adored and who was dearer to her than her very life.

In that instant, the Savior satisfied for us in strict justice by His human acts which drew from His divine personality an infinite value capable of making reparation for the offense of all mortal sins that ever had been or would be committed. His love pleased God more than all sins displease Him.15 Herein lies the essence of the mystery of the redemption. In union with her Son on Calvary, Mary satisfied for us by a satisfaction based, not on strict justice, but on the rights of the infinite friendship or charity which united her to God.16

At the moment when her Son was about to die on the cross, apparently defeated and abandoned, she did not cease for a moment to believe that He was the Word made flesh, the Savior of the world, who would rise in three days as He had predicted. This was the greatest act of faith and hope ever made; after Christ's act of love, it was also the greatest act of love. It made Mary the queen of martyrs,

13 *Ibid.,* 19:23.

14 *Litt. Apost., Inter sodalicia,* March 22, 1918. *(Act. Ap. Sed.,* 1918, p. 182; quoted in Denzinger, i6th cd., no. 3034, n.4.)

15 See Illa, q.48, a.2: "He properly atones for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves not less, or even more, than he detested the offense. But by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race. . . . First of all, because of the exceeding charity from which He suffered; secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in atonement, for it was the life of one who was God and man; thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured."

16 "Satisfactio B. M. Virginis fundatur, non in stricta justitia, sed in jure amicabili." This is the common teaching of theologians.

for she was a martyr, not only for Christ but with Christ; so much so, that a single cross sufficed for her Son and for her. She was, in a sense, nailed to it by her love for Him. She was thus the co-redemptrix, as Pope Benedict XV says, in this sense, that with Christ, through Him, and in Him, she bought back the human race.[17]

For the same reason, all that Christ merited for us on the cross in strict justice, Mary merited for us by congruous merit, based on the charity that united her to God. Christ alone, as head of the human race, could strictly merit to transmit divine life to us. But Pius X sanctioned the teaching of theologians when he wrote: "Mary, united to Christ in the work of salvation, merited *de congruo* for us what Christ merited for us *de condigno." [18]*

This common teaching of theologians, thus sanctioned by the sovereign pontiffs, has for its principal traditional basis the fact that Mary is called in all Greek and Latin tradition the new Eve, Mother of all men in regard to the life of the soul, as Eve was in regard to the life of the body. It stands to reason that the spiritual mother of all men ought to give them spiritual life, not as the principal physical cause (for God alone can be the principal physical cause of divine grace), but as the moral cause by merit *de congruo,* merit *de condigno* being reserved to Christ.

The Office and Mass proper to Mary Mediatrix assemble the principal testimonies of tradition on this point with their scriptural foundations, in particular the clearcut statements of St. Ephrem, the glory of the Syriac Church, of St. Germanus of Constantinople, of St. Bernard, and of St. Bernardine of Siena. Even as early as the second and third centuries, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian insisted on the parallel between Eve and Mary, and showed that if

17 Benedict XV, *Litt. Apost.,* citat.: "Ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et paene commortua, sic materna in Filium jura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandaeque Dei justitiae, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, *ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse.'"* Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 3034, n.4.

18 Cf. Piux X, Encyclical, *Ad diem illum,* Feb. 2, 1904 (Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* 3034): "Quoniam universis sanctitate praestat conjunctioneque cum Christo atque a Christo ascita in humanae salutis opus, de congruo, ut aiunt, promeruit nobis, quae Christus de condigno promeruit, estque princeps largiendarum gratiarum ministra." It should be remarked that merit *de congruo,* which is based *in jure amicabili seu in caritate* is a merit properly so called, although inferior to merit *de cotidigno.* The word "merit" is used for both according to an analogy of proper and not only metaphorical proportionality.

the first concurred in our fall, the second collaborated in our redemption.[19]

This teaching of tradition itself rests in part on the words of Christ, related in the Gospel of the Mass for the feast of Mary Mediatrix. The Savior was about to die and, seeing "His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."[20] The literal meaning of these words, "Behold thy son," points to St. John, but for God, events and persons signify others;[21] here St. John represents spiritually all men purchased by the sacrifice of the cross. God and His Christ speak not only by the words They use, but by the events and persons whose masters They are, and by whom They signify what They wish according to the plan of Providence. The dying Christ, addressing Mary and John, saw in John the personification of all men, for whom He was shedding

[19] St. Irenaeus, who represents the Churches of Asia where he was trained, the Church of Rome where he lived, and the Churches of Gaul where he taught, wrote *(Adv. haeres.,* V, 19, 1): "As Eve, seduced by the discourse of the (rebellious) angel, turned away from God and betrayed His word, so Mary heard from the angel the good tidings of the truth. She bore God in her bosom because she obeyed His word. . . . The human race, enchained by a virgin, was delivered by a virgin . . . ; the prudence of the serpent yielded to the simplicity of the dove; the bonds which chained us in death were broken."

In a prayer used in the second nocturn of the Office of Mary Mediatrix, St. Ephrem concludes from this parallel between Eve and the Mother of God, that "Mary is, after Jesus, the mediator par excellence, the mediatrix of the entire world, and that it is through her that we obtain all spiritual goods *(tu creaturam replesti o?nni genere beneficii caelestibus laetitiam attulisti, terrestria salvasti).*

St. Germanus of Constantinople *(Oratio 9, PG,* XCVIII, 377 ff., quoted in the same nocturn of the Office) even says: "No one is saved except by thee, O most holy; no one is delivered except through thee, O most immaculate; no one receives the gifts of God except through thee, O purest."

St. Bernard says: "O our mediatrix, O our advocate, reconcile us with thy Son; recommend us to thy Son; present us to thy Son" (Second sermon *In adventu,* 5). "It is the will of God that we should have everything through Mary" (On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, no. 7). "She is full of grace; the overflow is poured out on us" (Sermon II on the Assumption, no. 2).

[20] John 19:26 f.

[21] Sec la q. 1, a. 10: "The author of Holy Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as men also can do), but also by things themselves."

His blood. As this word, so to speak, created in Mary a most pro-, found maternal affection, which did not cease to envelop the soul of the beloved disciple, this supernatural affection extended to all of us and made Mary truly the spiritual mother of all men. In the eighth century we find Abbot Rupert expressing this same idea, and after him St. Bernardine of Siena, Bossuet, Blessed Grignion de Montfort, and many others. It is the logical result of what tradition tells us about the new Eve, the spiritual mother of all men.

Finally, if we studied theologically all that is required for merit *de congruo,* based not on justice, but on charity or supernatural friendship which unites us to God, we could not find it better realized than in Mary. Since, in fact, a good Christian mother by her virtue thus merits graces for her children,[22] with how much greater reason can Mary, who is incomparably more closely united to God by the plenitude of her charity, merit *de congruo* for all men.

Such is the ascending mediation of Mary in so far as she offered the sacrifice of the cross with Christ for us, making reparation and meriting for us. We shall now consider the descending mediation, by which she distributes the gifts of God to us.

Mary Obtains and Distributes All Graces

That Mary obtains for us and distributes to us all graces is a certain doctrine, according to what we have just said about the mother of all men. As mother, she is interested in their salvation, prays for them, and obtains for them the graces they receive. In the *Ave Maris Stella* we read:

Salve vincla reis,	Break the sinner's fetters,
Profer lumen caecis,	To the blind give day,
Mala nostra pelle,	Ward all evils from us,
Bona cuncta posce.[2*]	For all blessings pray.

In an encyclical on the Rosary, Leo XIII says: "According to the

22 See Ia IIae, q. 114, a. 6: "It is clear that no one can merit condignly for another his first grace, save Christ alone . . . inasmuch as He is the head of the Church and the author of human salvation. . . . But one may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfills God's will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfill man's desire for the salvation of another, although sometimes there may be an impediment on the part of him whose salvation rhe just man desires."

28 The Jansenists altered this verse in order not to affirm this universal mediation of Mary.

will of God, nothing is granted to us except through Mary; and, as no one can go to the Father except through the Son, so generally no one can draw near to Christ except through Mary." [24]

The Church, in fact, turns to Mary to obtain graces of all kinds, both temporal and spiritual; among these last, from the grace of conversion up to that of final perseverance, to say nothing of those needed by virgins to preserve virginity, by apostles to exercise their apostolate, by martyrs to remain firm in the faith. In the Litany of Loreto, which has been universally recited in the Church for many centuries, Mary is for this reason called: "Health of the sick, refuge of sinners, comforter of the afflicted, help of Christians, queen of apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins." Thus all kinds of graces are distributed by her, even, in a sense, those of the sacraments; for she merited them for us in union with Christ on Calvary. In addition, she disposes us, by her prayer, to approach the sacraments and to receive them well. At times she even sends us a priest, without whom this sacramental help would not be given tous.

Finally, not only every kind of grace is distributed to us by Mary, but every grace in particular. Is this not what the faith of the Church says in the words of the Hail Mary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen"? This "now" is said every moment in the Church by thousands of Christians who thus ask for the grace of the present moment. This grace is the most individual of graces; it varies with each of us, and for each one of us at every moment. If we are distracted while saying this word, Mary, who is not distracted, knows our spiritual needs of every instant, and prays for us, and obtains for us all the graces that we receive. This teaching, contained in the faith of the Church and expressed by the common prayers *(lex orandi lex credendi},* is based on Scripture and tradition. Even during her earthly life, Mary truly appears in Scripture as the distributor of graces. Through Mary, Jesus sanctified the Precursor when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth and sang the *Magnificat.* Through His mother, Jesus confirmed the faith of the disciples at Cana, by granting the miracle that she asked. Through her, He strengthened the faith of John on Calvary, saying to him: "Behold thy mother." Lastly, by

M Encyclical on the Rosary, *Octobri mense,* September 22, 1891 (Denzinger, no. 3033).

her the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles, for she was praying with them in the cenacle on Pentecost day when the Holy Ghost descended in the form of tongues of fire.[25]

With even greater reason after the assumption and her entrance into glory, Mary is the distributor of all graces. As a beatified mother knows in heaven the spiritual needs of her children whom she left on earth, Mary knows the spiritual needs of all men. Since she is an excellent mother, she prays for them and, since she is all powerful over the heart of her Son, she obtains for them all the graces that they receive, all which those receive who do not persist in evil. She is, it has been said, like an aqueduct of graces and, in the mystical body, like the virginal neck uniting the head to its members.

When we treat of what the prayer of proficients ought to be, we shall speak of true devotion to Mary as it was understood by Blessed Grignion de Montfort. Even now we can see how expedient it is frequently to use the prayer of mediators, that is, to begin our prayer by a trusting, filial conversation with Mary, that she may lead us to the intimacy of her Son, and that the holy soul of the Savior may then lift us to union with God, since Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.[20]

25 Acts 1:14.

26 Several Thomistic theologians admit that, as the humanity of Christ is the physical instrumental cause of all the graces that we receive (cf. St. Thomas, Illa, q.43, a.2; q.48, a.6; q.62, a.5), everything leads us to think that, in a manner subordinated to Christ, Mary is not only the moral but also the physical instrumental cause of the transmission of these graces. We do not think that this can be established with true certitude, but the principles formulated by St. Thomas on this subject in regard to the humanity of Christ incline us to think so.

CHAPTER VII

The Growth of the Life of Grace by Merit, Prayer, and the Sacraments

WE CANNOT treat of the bases of the interior life, of its source, without speaking of the growth of sanctifying grace and of charity. No one can be saved without this supernatural virtue, the highest of all, which ought to inspire and animate the others. Moreover, it ought not to remain stationary, but should grow in us even until death.[1] This point of doctrine can and should throw great light on the spiritual life since it is the basis of every exhortation to make progress with great humility and generosity by ardently desiring the full perfection of charity, intimate union with God, by striving to obtain it, and humbly asking for it. The virtues of humility and magnanimity ought always to be united. We shall see, first of all, why charity ought ever to increase in us until death; then, how it should grow in three ways: by merit, prayer, and the sacraments.

Why the Life of Grace and Charity Should Grow in Us until Death

We must first point out that no matter how low in degree, true charity, received in baptism or restored by absolution, already loves God, the Author of salvation, more than self and above all things, and one's neighbor as oneself for the love of God. The slightest degree of infused charity immensely surpasses the natural love that we can have for God, the Author of nature, and for man. Charity, no matter of how low a degree, excludes no one, for this exclusion would be a grave sin which would destroy it. Nevertheless this

[1] See IIa IIae, q.24, a.4-10.

charity of beginners is not victorious over all egoism; far from it. Beside it we find in our souls an inordinate love of self which, without being gravely culpable, is an obstacle that takes from charity the freedom of its action or its radiation. Gray stands between black and white. Between the state of mortal sin and that of perfect and radiant charity, stands charity of a very low degree, the exercise of which is often hindered by a troop of habitual venial sins, of immoderate self-love, of vanity, of laziness, of injustice, and the like.

Undoubtedly, this charity of low degree ought to grow. St. Paul says to the Ephesians (4:15): "But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him." To the Philippians (1:9) he declares: "I pray that your charity may more and more abound"; and in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (3:12 f.): "May the Lord multiply you, and make you abound in charity towards one another, and towards all men: as we do also towards you, to confirm your hearts without blame, in holiness, before God." In the Apocalypse (22:11) we read: "He that is just, let him be justified still: and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." In the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs (4:18) tells us: "The path of the just as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day."

Why should charity thus grow in us? It should grow because the Christian on earth is a traveler, *viator,* who is advancing spiritually toward God. His spiritual advancement is made by more and more perfect acts of love, "steps of love," as St. Gregory says. We must conclude from this that charity on earth can and should always increase, otherwise the Christian would cease in a sense to be a *viator;* he would stop before reaching the end of his journey.[2] The way is intended for travelers, not for those who stop en route and sleep. Moreover, we are told in St. Luke (6:25): "Woe to you that are filled: for you shall hunger," but on the other hand, we read in St. Matthew (5:6): "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Christ also declared: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [8]

Since every traveler toward eternity should while on earth grow in charity, not only beginners and proficients, but the perfect ought

2 *Ibid.,* a. 4.
8 John 7:37 f.

always to draw nearer to God. And what is more, these last ought to advance toward Him so much the more rapidly as they are nearer to Him and as He draws them more strongly. St. Thomas affirms this when he comments on the words of St. Paul to the Hebrews (10:25): "Comforting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." St. Thomas writes in his commentary on this verse of the epistle: "Some one might ask why we should thus progress in faith and love. The answer is that the natural (or connatural) movement becomes so much the more rapid as it approaches its term, while it is the inverse for violent movement." (As a matter of fact, we say today that the fall of bodies is uniformly accelerated, while the inverse movement of a stone tossed into the air is uniformly retarded.) "Now," continues St. Thomas, "grace perfects and inclines to good according to the manner of nature. It follows that those who are in the state of grace ought so much the more to grow in charity as they draw near their last end (and are more attracted by it). This is why St. Paul says here: 'Not forsaking our assembly ... ; but comforting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching,' that is, the end of the journey. 'The night is past, and the day is at hand' (Rom. 13:12). 'But the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day' " (Prov. 4:18).*

This remark thus briefly made by St. Thomas, as it were in passing, has not been as much emphasized by theologians as it deserves. It is, however, striking that St. Thomas should have noted it in so simple, so rapid, and so beautiful a manner before the discovery of the law of universal gravitation and at a time when people knew only very imperfectly (without having measured it) the acceleration of the fall of bodies. St. Thomas means that in the saints the spiritual life is more and more intensified; the movement of their

* See St. Thomas, *In Ep. ad Hebr.,* 10:25. See also St. Thomas, I, *De coelo,* chap. 8, iect. 17: "Terra (vel corpus grave) velocius movetur quanto magis descendit." Cf. Ia Ilae, q.35, a.6: "Every natural movement is more intense in the end, when a thing approaches the term that is suitable to its nature, than at the beginning, ... as though nature were more eager in tending to what is suitable to it than in shunning what is unsuitable." This growing rapidity of the natural movement of bodies has been measured by modern physics and is explained in the law of acceleration of falling bodies, a particular case of the universal gravitation of bodies, symbol of what the gravitation of souls toward God should be. We studied this analogy at considerable length in *L'aniour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus* (1,150-62).

souls rises to the zenith and no longer descends. For them, there is no twilight; only the body weakens with age.

Such is the law of universal attraction in the spiritual order. As bodies are attracted in direct ratio to their mass and in inverse ratio to the square of their distance, that is, they are so much the more attracted as they draw near each other; in like manner souls are drawn by God so much the more as they approach Him. Alluding to the end of His course, Christ said with this meaning: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (on the cross), will draw all things to Myself." [6] "No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him." [7] The higher one rises, the more the efficient cause, which leads to action, and the final cause, which attracts to it, tend to become identified. God moves us and draws us to Himself. He is the beginning and the end of all, sovereign Good, who attracts love so much the more strongly as one draws nearer to Him. Thus, in the lives of the saints the progress of love during their last years is much more rapid than in their earlier life. They advance, not with an equal but with a quickened step, in spite of the heaviness of old age and a certain enfeebling of the sensible faculties, such as the sensible memory. Yet they hear and live the words of the psalm: "Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's." [8] Grace and, in particular, charity continually grow in them.

This increasingly rapid progress existed especially in the life of the Blessed Virgin for it found no obstacle in her, and it was so much the more intense as the initial speed, or the first grace, was greater. There was in her a marvelous acceleration of the love of God, an acceleration of which that of the fall of bodies is but a remote image.

We see thus why charity ought not only to grow in us until death, but to increase more and more like a falling body, the speed of which increases until it reaches its last end.

How, then, does charity grow in us? To be sure, in its lowest degree charity already loves God above all else with a love of esteem, and its neighbor in general, without excluding anyone. In this sense it cannot have a greater extension; but it can grow in intensity, take

[6] John 12:32.
[7] *Ibid.*, 6:44.
[8] Ps. 102:5.

deeper root in our will, more strongly determine its inclination to turn to God and to flee sin by more generous acts. As a matter of fact, charity does not grow by addition, like a heap of wheat.[8] This addition would multiply charity without making it more intense. The increase would be in the order of quantity rather than of quality, which is quite a different thing.[9] In reality, charity increases in us in so far as it becomes stronger, takes deeper root in our will, or, speaking without a metaphor, in so far as it inheres more strongly in our will and determines it more profoundly toward supernatural good by withdrawing it from evil. As in the scholar learning becomes more profound, more penetrating, more certain, without always reaching out to new conclusions, so charity grows in us by making us love God more perfectly and more purely for Himself, and our neighbor for God. If people had a better understanding of this doctrine, as St. Thomas expounds it, they would see more clearly the necessity of the passive purifications of the spirit, which St. John of the Cross speaks of. The purpose of these purifications is to free the highest virtues of all alloy, and to bring into powerful relief their formal objects: divine truth and divine goodness. Charity increases, therefore, like a quality, like heat, by becoming more intense, and that in several ways: by merit, prayer, and the sacraments.

The Increase of Charity by Our Merits

A meritorious act is one which proceeds from charity, or from an inspired virtue vivified by charity, and which gives a right to a supernatural reward: first of all, to an increase of grace and of charity itself.

Meritorious acts do not themselves directly produce the increase of charity; for charity is not an acquired virtue produced and augmented by the repetition of acts, but it is an infused virtue. It was given to us by baptism, and as God alone can produce it in us, since

[8] See IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 5.

[9] If, in fact, the second degree of charity were thus added to the first, it would be its equal or superior. If it were equal, charity would only be multiplied like the grains of wheat in a pile; it would not be rendered more intense. If, on the contrary, the second degree of charity were superior to the first, the latter would become useless.

it is a participation in His intimate life, He alone also can increase it. The growth of charity and the infused virtues, which are united to it, is like a continuous production. Thus St. Paul says: "I have planted (by preaching and baptism), Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (is all). . . . For we are God's coadjutors: you are God's husbandry; you are God's building." [10] "He . . . will . . . increase the growth of the fruits of your justice." [11]

Although our acts of charity cannot produce the increase of this virtue, they concur in it in two ways: morally, by meriting it; and physically, by preparing us to receive it. Merit is a right to a recompense; it does not produce this reward, it obtains it. By his supernatural good works the just man merits the increase of charity,[12] as the Council of Trent defined.[13] While awaiting the reward of heaven, the Lord gives a just man even here on earth the recompense of growing in divine love, that is, of having a stronger and purer love. Quietism, which showed a want of esteem for the divine reward under the pretext of absolute disinterestedness, forgot that the more disinterested the soul is, the more it desires this recompense: that is, more purely and more strongly to love its God. This love is accompanied by an increase of hope, of the other infused virtues, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The acts of charity and of the virtues inspired by it do not merit, from the moral point of view, solely the increase of charity, but they dispose the soul physically to receive it, in the sense that, as it were, they open our faculties that they may receive more. They deepen them, so to speak, that the divine life may better penetrate them and elevate them while purifying them.[14]

This is true especially of intense or very fervent acts of charity. A very generous act of love of God sometimes decides a whole life and merits a great increase of charity by disposing us to receive it immediately. It is as if a person were raised to a higher level, and

10 See I Cor. 3:6-9.
11 See II Cor. 9:10.
12 *Surnnu,* Ia Ilae, q. 114, a. 8.
13 Sess. VI, can. 24, 32.
14 See IIa Hae, q. 24, a. 7, corp, and ad 211m.

in this ascent he has a new view of the things of God and a new impulse. He who had two talents thus immediately obtains one or two more, perhaps an even greater number, and, as St. Thomas says, the Holy Ghost is then sent anew to us, for He becomes present in us in a new, more intimate, and more radiating manner.[15]*

This, however, brings up a difficult problem that has often been discussed by theologians and that is of great practical importance. Since it is clear that an intense or fervent act of charity disposes us to receive immediately an increase of this infused virtue and of all the others connected with it, it is not at all certain that a weak act of charity, an act lacking intensity and generosity *(remissus),* immediately obtains an increase of the life of grace. Does he who has five talents and acts weakly as if he had only two, obtain at once by this feeble and imperfect meritorious act an increase of charity? Several modem theologians, who follow Suarez, think so.[16] Such is not the thought of St. Thomas and of the early theologians in general. The holy doctor says: "Every (even imperfect) act of charity merits an increase of charity; however, this increase does not always come at once, but only when we strive generously for it." [17] The reason is that the increase of sanctifying grace and of charity is conferred by God only according to the disposition of the subject who is to receive it, just as, at the moment of conversion or justification, sanctifying grace is given in a more or less elevated degree according to the fervor of the contrition of him who is converted.[18] Evidently he who has five talents and acts as if he had only two, does not, in fact, as yet dispose himself to receive a sixth, for the act, although good, is notably inferior to the degree of virtue from which it proceeds. In this is a quite manifest analogy between supernatural acts and natural acts: a very intelligent man who is only slightly studious makes little progress in learning, whereas another who is less gifted but very hard working achieves good results. Likewise in the natural order, a friendship is strengthened only by more generous acts; very imperfect acts serve only to maintain it, not to make it grow. Therefore it seems we must conclude with St. Thomas that im-

15 See la, q.43, a.6 ad ium.
16 Suarez, *De gratia,* VIII, chap. 2.
17 See Ila Ilae, q. 24, a.6 ad turn; la Ilae, q. 114, a.8 ad jum.
18 See la Ilae, q. 112, a.2; Ila Ilae, q. 24, a.3.

perfect acts *(remissi)* of charity, although meritorious, do not at once obtain the increase of grace which they merit.[19]

This doctrine should lead us often to make generous acts of charity. We might note, in passing, that particularly on the day of the

[10] When do they obtain this increase of grace? It is very difficult to answer this question on which Thomists themselves are divided.

Some Thomists, Banez, Contenson, and others, thought that imperfect meritorious acts obtain the increase of charity as soon as the just man makes a fervent act which disposes to this increase; but they add that this increase, which corresponds to this last disposition, would be as great if the imperfect meritorious acts had not preceded the fervent act. Other Thomists (John of St. Thomas, the Carmelites of Salamanca, Gonet, Billuart, and others) quite commonly answer this opinion by stating that then the imperfect meritorious acts already accomplished would be defrauded of the increase which they merited. Therefore the merit of these acts would no longer be true, condign merit in justice. By these imperfect good acts, the just soul would not grow in charity, an idea contrary to the declaration of the Council of Trent (Sess. VI, chap, io), that a just man by his good works grows in grace and charity. If anyone who has ten talents acts for many years as if he had only eight, and when dying makes an act of charity employing his ten talents, he ought to have, it seems, a greater essential reward *(praemium essentiale)* than he who when dying makes an identical act after having spent his whole life in mortal sin. Imperfect good acts seem, therefore, truly to merit a special increase of grace distinct from that due to the fervent act which follows them. But when does the just man receive this special increase of charity that is due to his imperfect meritorious acts (which are very frequent in our lives)? We can hardly admit that it may be here below when one performs a more fervent act, for then the increase received seems to correspond only to the disposition realized by this last act (cf. Salmanticenses, *De caritate,* disp. V, dub. 3, § 2).

Cajetan is sometimes credited with this opinion, that the increase due to weak acts of charity may be granted at the moment of a fervent Communion, for grace is granted then according to the dispositions of the subject, dispositions in which the merits of *remissi* acts enter. This opinion may be held.

Good Thomists, like John of St. Thomas, the Carmelites of Salamanca, Gonet, and Billuart, hold that if the just man goes to purgatory, he receives there this increase of grace when he makes intense acts of charity, which are no longer meritorious, since the hour of meriting is passed, but which prepare the soul to receive the increase already merited and not yet obtained for lack of sufficient dispositions. This opinion is seriously probable.

According to these same theologians, if the just man in question does not have to go to purgatory, the increase of charity due to his imperfect meritorious acts is granted to him at the instant of his entrance into glory, for in that instant the separated soul, which can no longer merit, makes as intense an act of love of God as possible. This act corresponds to all the merits of his past life. This opinion conforms to the general principle that the ultimate disposition to a form or perfection is realized at the same indivisible instant as this very perfection itself, as happens in the justification of an adult.

The theology of these very elevated and mysterious matters can scarcely go beyond these solutions, which arc seriously probable.

monthly retreat or the first Friday of the month, we would do well to multiply generous acts of love of God, not in a mechanical fashion, like counting them, but on every opportune occasion, in order to preserve the spirit of fervor and to avoid growing tepid. We should recall also that the Holy Ghost generally moves souls according to the degree of their infused virtues and of the seven gifts, or of their habitual docility. It would be incomprehensible that He would without reason move the soul to imperfect acts, for in that case the soul would have received in vain a high degree of infused virtue and of the gifts. Therefore, if the just man does not place an obstacle to the divine action, he will normally receive increasingly elevated graces of light and love that he may generously ascend toward God.

As good theologians teach,[20] God is more glorified by a single act of charity of ten talents than by ten acts of charity of one talent each. Likewise a single very perfect just soul pleases God more than many others who remain in mediocrity or tepidity. Quality is superior to quantity. This is why the plenitude of grace in Mary surpassed from the first day of her existence that of all the saints, as a single diamond is worth more than a quantity of other precious stones.

Charity, therefore, ought by our merits to grow until death. With this infused virtue, our aptitude to receive a new increase grows,[21] our spiritual heart dilates more and more, and our divine capacity is enlarged according to the words of the psalm: "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart."[22] St. Paul also says: "Our heart is enlarged. . . . Be you also enlarged."[23]

We too often forget that we are en route to eternity, and we try to settle down in the present life as if it were going to last forever. We resemble those travelers who install themselves in one of

[20] Cf. Salmanticenses, *De caritate,* disp. V, dub. 3, § 7, nos. 76, 80, 85, 93,117.

[21] See IIa IIae, q.24, a. 7: "Whenever charity increases, there is a corresponding increased ability to receive a further increase."

Ibid., ad zum: "The capacity of the rational creature is increased by charity, because the heart is enlarged thereby, according to II Cor. 6:11: Our heart is enlarged'; so that it still remains capable of receiving a further increase."

[22] Ps. 118:32.

[23] See II Cor. *6:*11, 13.

the great international trains where people sleep and eat as if they were in a hotel. They sometimes forget that they are on a journey. Then they look out of the window, see the vanishing countryside, notice that the train stops and that some people are getting off, and say to themselves that they also will soon reach their destination. The present life is like one of these great trains where people forget that they are on a journey. Then some persons alight from the train, that is to say, they die, and we are reminded that we must alight also. But, although we see many persons die, we do not succeed in realizing that some day our turn will come. Let us live, on the contrary, with our eyes fixed on the end of the journey; then we shall not lose the time that is given us, and it will become more and more filled with merits for eternity.

The Increase of the Life of Grace Through Prayer

The growth of charity, of the infused virtues, and of the gifts which accompany it, is obtained not only by merit, but by prayer. We ask daily, in fact, to grow in the love of God when we say: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come (more and more in us), Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven (may we observe Thy precepts more perfectly)." The Council of Trent[24] reminds us that this growth of the virtues is asked by the Church when it prays thus: "Increase, O Lord, our faith, hope, and charity" (Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost).

We should recall here the difference between the prayer of petition and merit. The sinner who has lost sanctifying grace cannot merit in this state, for sanctifying grace is the radical principle of all supernatural merit. Yet, by an actual transitory grace, the sinner can pray; he can ask for the grace of conversion; and, if he asks for it with humility, confidence, and perseverance, he will obtain it. Whereas merit, which is a right to a reward, is related to divine justice, prayer is addressed to the mercy of God, which often restores fallen souls and hears their prayers without any merit on their part.[25] From the depths of the abyss into which it has fallen and where it can no longer merit, the most wretched soul may utter that cry to the divine mercy, which is prayer. The abyss of wretched-

[24] Scss. VI, chap. io.
[25] Cf. Ila Ilae, q.8j, a. 16, c. and ad zurn.

ness calls to that of mercy, *abysms abyssum invocat,* and if the sinner puts his whole heart into this appeal, he will be heard. His soul will be lifted up, and God will be glorified, as was the case with Magdalen. The impetrating power of prayer does not presuppose the state of grace, whereas merit does.

After conversion or justification, we can obtain the increase of the life of grace both by merit and by prayer. When prayer is humble, trusting, and persevering, it obtains for us a more lively faith, a firmer hope, a more ardent charity, all of which we ask for in the first three petitions of the Our Father.[20] The mental prayer of a just man, who delights in meditating slowly on the Our Father, in nourishing his soul profoundly with each of its petitions, in remaining at times for half an hour in the loving contemplation of one of them, is at once meritorious and impetrating.[27] It gives a right to an increase of charity, from which it proceeds, and by the impetrating power of prayer it often obtains more than it merits. Besides, when mental prayer is truly fervent, it obtains this increase immediately. Thereby we see how fruitful mental prayer can be; how it draws God strongly toward us that He may give Himself intimately to us and that we may give ourselves to Him. *We* should often recite the beautiful prayer of Blessed Nicholas of Fliie: "Lord Jesus, take me from myself, and give me to Thyself." In it is a fervent meritorious act which immediately obtains the increase of charity that it merits, and a supplication which obtains even more than it merits. Then one's heart dilates more and more in order to receive divine grace more abundantly; the soul empties itself of every creature and becomes more eager for God, in whom it finds in an eminent degree all that is worthy of being loved. It would be impossible to live too deeply by these things in recollection; sometimes it is given to a soul to live profoundly by them in the absolute silence of the night when everything is quiet and the soul is completely alone with its God, with its Savior, Jesus Christ. It then experiences His immense goodness and, by its mental prayer, which is at once meritorious and supplicating, it offers itself entirely to Him and receives Him in a prolonged spiritual communion that has a savor of eternal life. This is eternal life begun, as St. Thomas says.[28] Often, there-

" *Ibid.,* a. 2, 9, 15.
" *Ibid.,* a. *16.*
a,lbid., q.14, a.j ad jum; la Ilae, q.69, a.2; *De veritate,* q.14, a.2.

fore, the impetrating force of prayer is united to merit in order to obtain an increase of charity, a purer and stronger love of God.

Moreover, the just man may by prayer obtain certain graces which he could not merit, in particular the gift of final perseverance. This gift cannot be merited, for it is nothing other than the continuation until death of the state of grace, which is the principle of merit. Obviously it would be impossible to merit the very principle of merit.[29] However, final perseverance or the grace of a happy death can be obtained by humble, trusting, daily prayer. For this reason the Church invites us to say daily with fervor in the second part of the Hail Mary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Here prayer goes farther than merit, addressing itself, not to divine justice but to infinite mercy.

We can also ask God for the grace to know Him in an ever more living and intimate manner, by that knowledge which is called infused contemplation, and which results in a closer and more fruitful union with God. In this sense the Book of Wisdom (7:7-9) says: "I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me: and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay." We find also in Ps. 54:23: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall not suffer the just to labor forever." Not only will He come and sustain us, but He will come and nourish us with Himself and daily give Himself more profoundly to us. And again in Ps. 26:4 we read: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," that I may daily see a little more clearly that He is infinitely good to those who seek Him and to those who find Him.

By addressing infinite mercy, prayer manifestly exceeds merit. The sinner who is still incapable of meriting, may by prayer obtain the grace of conversion. By prayer, the just man often obtains graces which could not be merited, such as final perseverance and the efficacious graces which lead to it.

20 See Ia IIae, q. 114, a. 9.

The Increase of the Life of Grace through the Sacraments

Lastly, we must recall here that charity and the other infused virtues, as well as the seven gifts, grow in us through the sacraments. The just man grows thus in the love of God through absolution and especially by Communion. The merit and prayer of the just soul obtain the gifts of God *ex opere operantis,* by reason of the faith, piety, and charity of him who merits, but the sacraments produce grace *ex opere operato* in those who do not place an obstacle to it; in other words, by themselves they produce grace from the fact that they were instituted by God to apply the merits of the Savior to us. They produce grace independently of the prayers and the merits, either of the minister who confers them or of those who receive them. This explains why a bad priest, and even an unbeliever, may validly administer baptism, provided he has the intention of doing what the Church does in conferring it.

But, although the sacraments of themselves produce grace in those who do not place an obstacle to it, they produce it more or less abundantly according to the fervor of him who receives it. The Council of Trent[30] says that each one receives justice "according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills and according to each one's disposition." In the natural order, as St. Thomas observes, although an open fire of itself gives heat, a person benefits more from its influence in proportion as he draws closer to it. Likewise, in the supernatural order a person benefits so much the more from the sacraments as he approaches them with a more lively faith and a greater fervor of will. From this point of view, St. Thomas and many of the early theologians hold that, according as the sinner receives absolution with greater or less repentance, he recovers or does not recover the degree of grace which he had lost. "Now the intensity of the penitent movement," says St. Thomas, "may be proportionate sometimes to a greater grace than that from which man fell by sinning, sometimes to an equal grace, sometimes to a lesser. Wherefore the penitent sometimes arises to greater grace than that which he had before, sometimes to an equal, sometimes to a lesser grace."[31] It may be that a Christian

[30] Scss. VI, chap. 7.
[31] See IIIa, q.89, a. 2.

who had five talents and who loses them by mortal sin has afterward a contrition equal to only two talents; he then recovers grace in a degree notably inferior to that which he had previously. On the contrary, he may by reason of profound repentance recover grace in a more elevated degree, as was doubtless the case with St. Peter when he wept bitterly immediately after denying Christ.[32] This teaching is of great importance in the spiritual life for those who fall in the middle of their ascent; they can rise immediately and fervently and continue their ascent from where they left off. But it is also possible that they may rise only tardily and listlessly; they then remain midway instead of continuing the ascent.

It follows also from these principles that one fervent Communion is worth more than many tepid Communions taken together. The more a person approaches with lively faith, firm hope, ardent love, and fervor of will, our Lord present in the Eucharist, radiant source of graces, the more he benefits from our Lord's influence by graces of light, love, and strength. The Communion of St. Francis, St. Dominic, or St. Catherine of Siena was on certain days extremely fervent and proportionately fruitful; their dilated souls approached our Savior to receive abundantly and even superabundantly from Him that they might later in their apostolate give Him to other souls.

It may happen, on the contrary, that the fruit of Communion is least when a soul approaches the holy table with dispositions sufficient only not to hinder the effect of the sacrament. This should make us reflect seriously, if we show no true spiritual advancement after years of frequent or daily Communion.[33] Possibly by reason of a growing attachment to a certain venial sin, the effect of our daily

32 The merits deprived of life by mortal sin thus revive according to the measure of the penitent's fervor. They revive truly with their right to a special essential reward. For example, if a Christian, who has served the Lord generously for seventy years, should sin mortally and then before death be converted with a contrition equal to five talents, he will have in heaven a higher degree of glory than one who had lived badly all his life and who before death also had a contrition equal to five talents. The long merits of the first man's life revive, and, as they are chiefly a right to eternal life, to essential beatitude, this right revives with them. We see also in this case the intervention of infinite mercy. Cf. Billuart, *Cursus theol. de poenitentia,* dis. 3, chap. 5, "De reviviscentia meritorum per poenitentiam."

33 True, we must take into account the fact that the soul which advances knows its own wretchedness so much the more as it more clearly sees the grandeur of God.

Communion may be ever weaker, as the movement of a stone thrown vertically into the air is uniformly retarded until the stone falls down. God grant that this may never be our condition!

On the contrary, we should have sufficient generosity to permit the realization in us of that superior law which is verified in the lives of the saints. In other words, because each of our Communions ought not only to preserve but to increase charity in us, each Communion should be substantially more fervent and more fruitful than the preceding one; for each one, by increasing the love of God in us, ought to dispose us to receive our Lord on the following day with not only an equal but a superior fervor of will. Often, however, negligence and tepidity hinder the application of this law, of which that of the progressive attraction of bodies is only a symbol. Bodies are attracted to each other in increased ratio as they draw near to each other. Souls ought to make proportionately more rapid progress toward God as they draw near to Him and are more drawn by Him. Thus we see the meaning of our Savior's words: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," [34] the streams of living water which flow into the infinite ocean that is God, known and loved as He knows and loves Himself, for all eternity.

[34] John 7:37 f.

CHAPTER VIII

The True Nature of Christian Perfection

SO FAR we have spoken of the sources of the interior life, that is, of sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the seven gifts, the Blessed Trinity which dwells in us, and the influence which Christ the Redeemer and Mary Mediatrix exert on our souls that we may grow in the love of God. We must now consider the end of the interior life, not, however, its final end, of which we spoke when we said that the interior life is, in a sense, eternal life begun;[1] but the end which may be attained on earth, the Christian perfection that may be realized here below.

We shall see, first of all, the erroneous or incomplete ideas of perfection that have been proposed, then the true nature of Christian perfection. We shall also consider the Christian perfection that is obtainable on earth, comparing it with that of heaven. Then we shall see whether it is a duty or only a counsel for all to tend to it. Next, we shall speak of the different ages of the spiritual life, and then we shall treat of each one separately. Lastly, we shall inquire whether the full perfection of Christian life on earth belongs only to the ascetical order, or whether it truly belongs to the mystical order.

Erroneous or Incomplete Ideas of Perfection

To get an exact idea of the Christian perfection which the Gospel makes known to us and to see its loftiness, we shall not fail to profit by first recalling two other ideas of human perfection that have arisen according as men placed more or less stress on one form or another of their activity.

We may distinguish three principal ideas of human perfection

[1] Cf. *supra,* chnp. t.

which always tend to reappear. In antiquity the barbarians made it consist principally in fortitude. The majority of the Greek philosophers thought that it lay principally in wisdom. The Gospel tells us that it is especially in charity, or in the love of God and of our neighbor in God. These three words, fortitude, wisdom, and charity, express the dominant note in these three different conceptions of life. We shall briefly recall the first two by noting the forms they assume among us today; we shall thus better see the loftiness of the third, so much the more so as the first two contain an element of truth which, under the influence of charity, may take on great value.

The heroes of barbarian races made the perfection of man consist above all in fortitude, courage, bravery, as their legends, particularly those of the Niebelungen, remind us. The national pride of races would tend at times to bring them back to this ideal. In it is exalted the virtue of fortitude which has as its object difficult things that demand great energy and in which man's life is exposed, as in combats. An element of truth is contained in this idea, so much the more so as, in less tragic but painful and rather frequent circumstances, patience, constancy, and longanimity are needed. As St. Thomas, following Aristotle,[2] remarks, it is even more difficult thus to hold out, to endure for a long time, to remain firm in the midst of difficulties and blows, than it is to attack in a moment of enthusiasm. To make human perfection consist above all in fortitude, is the idea of a warrior, a soldier, an explorer, or an aviator. Often not a little pride and at times injustice is mingled in it. This idea, moreover, certainly does not suffice to put man in his true place in regard to God and his neighbor.

Some ardent souls transpose this notion into the supernatural order by purifying it, and they conceive of the Christian chiefly as a soldier of Christ, for St. Paul says: "Take unto you the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, . . . having on the breastplate of justice . . . taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one." [3] From this point of view, all the grandeur of martyrdom may be easily conceived.

[2] See IIa IIae, q. 123, a.6: "The principal act of fortitude is endurance, that is, to stand immovable in the midst of dangers rather than to attack them."

[3] Eph. 6:13-16.

But does its true grandeur come especially from the fact that it is an act of fortitude? Does it not rather derive, as St. Thomas says,4 from the fact that martyrdom is the incontestable and striking sign of great charity? The three centuries of persecution of the early Church were certainly centuries of courage, of heroic fortitude, but even more, centuries of love of God. Surely this is what distinguishes the Christian martyrs from the heroes of paganism.

From a point of view somewhat similar to that we have just discussed, some persons seem to place perfection especially in austerity, fasts, vigils, and other difficult things. This evaluation may be understood in a favorable sense in a religious order particularly vowed to prayer and immolation, or to reparation, which is a manifest sign of an ardent love of God, of real zeal. Care must be taken, however, not to place a value on austerity as such, as if it were, not a means of advancement and reparation, but an end. Were this true, the most perfect religious life would be the most austere, the most difficult, and not that life which would have the best end and the means most adapted to that end.® Is what is arduous especially the proper object of virtue? This object is rather the good. Not every difficult act is morally good; at times it is a rash feat of strength. And if the good is often difficult, it is not always so. Some acts of love of God and of our neighbor are acoomplished without difficulty, with a great supernatural impulse, and are manifestly very meritorious since they proceed from great charity.

Can fortitude be the highest virtue? For the soldier as such it may be the most necessary virtue; bravery may be the perfection of the soldier. But is it the perfection of man as man, and of a Christian as a Christian? Theology answers that fortitude and patience are virtues necessary and indispensable to perfection. Above them, however, there is justice in regard to others; there is prudence, which directs all the moral virtues; and there are especially the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity), which have God as their immediate object. This explains why martyrdom, which is an act of the virtue of fortitude, draws its grandeur chiefly from the fact that it is the sign of a great love, of God.

We cannot, therefore, admit that the perfection of man and of the Christian consists chiefly in fortitude or in patience, necessary

‘ See Ila Ilae, q. 124, a. 1-3.
'*Ibid.,* q. 188, a.7 ad iuni; a.8.

as these virtues are. Fortitude is evidently not the perfection of our intellect in regard to supreme truth, or that of our will in regard to sovereign good; it is merely a virtue that represses fear in the midst of difficulties and dangers in order that we may follow right reason.

If perfection does not consist primarily in fortitude, does it consist chiefly in wisdom? The majority of the Greek philosophers thought so. According to them, man is distinguished from lower beings by his intellect, and therefore the perfection of man as such is chiefly the perfection of his intellect, that is, the wisdom or eminent knowledge of all tilings by their supreme cause and last end. Perfection would thus lie in the knowledge or contemplation of the sovereign good, and in the love which springs from this knowledge. Plato, among others, even thought that it suffices to know the sovereign good in order to love it efficaciously above all, and that virtue is a science. As Aristotle [6] remarks, this opinion did not take sufficient account of man's free will, which can deviate in spite of the knowledge of the duty to be accomplished. Nevertheless Aristotle himself placed the perfection of man in wisdom accompanied by the virtues which are subordinate to it: that is, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Wisdom, like prudence which it dominates, is, of a certainty, indispensable to perfection and to the conduct of life; but we cannot say that speculative knowledge of God, the sovereign Good, is necessarily followed by the love of God. A philosopher with a powerful intellect, though he has a correct idea of God, First Cause of the universe and Last End, may not bç a good man, a man of good will. At times he may be even a very bad man. That which is true is the good of the intellect, but it is not the good of the entire man, not the whole good of man.[7]

Learning can exist without the love of God and of one's neighbor. When it does, as St. Paul says, it produces the inflation of pride by making us live for ourselves and not for God. The perfection of a professor or of a doctor, as such, is not the perfection of man as man, or of a Christian as a Christian. A good professor who teaches the humanities or the elements of philosophy with distinction is not

[6] Consult *Niconiacbean Ethics,* Rk. Ill, chap. 7; Bk. VII, chap. 11, and the commentary of St. Thomas. See also la Ilae, q.58, a.2.

[7] Sec la Ilae, q.57, a. t: "Whether the habits of the speculative intellect are virtues?"

always a good man. We should not confound the perfection of the speculative intellect with that of the entire man. The latter requires the profound rectification of the will in regard to our last end. The will is the faculty that must be directed toward the good of the entire subect, of the entire man, and not toward the good merely of the intellect.[8] Aristotle made this observation,[9] but it was easier to think it than to live it.

Lastly, is not the love of God here on earth superior to the knowledge of God? Knowledge draws God, in a sense, toward us by imposing on Him in a certain manner the limits of our circumscribed ideas, whereas the love of God draws us toward Him and makes us love in Him what we cannot know precisely, for we are sure that His inner life, which is hidden from us, is infinitely lovable.[10]

The conception of the Greek philosophers, which makes perfection consist in wisdom, is found again today mingled with many errors in those who put intellectual culture above everything else, and also in the theosophists, for whom perfection lies in "a consciousness of our identity with God," in the intuition of what is divine in us.[11]

Far from putting the creature in his humble place beneath the Creator, theosophy presupposes pantheism, which is the negation of the order of grace and of all Christian dogmas, although it often preserves the terms of Christianity while giving them an entirely different meaning. (If a man becomes involved in theosophy, he may find himself enmeshed body and soul.) A most perfidious imitation and corruption of our asceticism and mysticism, theosophy is a product of the imagination in which God and the world are confounded, and in which we find, as we do in a novelty store, all sorts of antiques which attract our curiosity and turn our souls away from divine truth and eternal life. This heresy reminds us of

[8] *Ibid.,* a.4, where St. Thomas shows that prudence, which is a true virtue, presupposes the rightness of the will with regard to the good of the whole man, whereas art and the sciences do not presuppose it. The prudent man is a good man, of whom people simply say that he is good, and not only a good painter, a good architect, a good physician, a good mathematician.

[9] *Ethics,* Bk. VI, chap. 5: How prudence, which is truly a virtue, is distinct from art.

[10] See la, q.8z, a. 3: "The love of God is better than the knowledge of God."

[11] Cf. P. Mainagc, O.P., *Les principes de la théosophie,* 1922 (cd. *Revue des jeunes).*

the bewitching foolishness which darkens the intellect, as the Book of Wisdom says: "For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things." [12]

While keeping themselves free from similar aberrations, some Christians, who have a quietist tendency, are inclined to think that a person can rapidly reach perfection by the assiduous reading of the great mystics, without concerning himself enough about practicing the virtues which these books recommend, and without remembering sufficiently that true contemplation should be completely penetrated by supernatural charity and forgetfulness of self.

Farther on we shall see that contemplation, which is an act of the intellect, is not what chiefly constitutes perfection. As will be made evident, perfection lies in union with God through charity. The loving contemplation of God is, so to speak, a means conjoined to this end; it disposes us immediately to union with God. The end toward which we must tend is not contemplation, but God Himself to be loved above all.

From all that we have just said, it follows that perfection indubitably requires fortitude, patience, abnegation, and also wisdom; indeed, all the theological and moral virtues accompanied by the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary. Does it follow that perfection consists in the ensemble of the virtues? In a sense it does, but on condition that this ensemble be ordered like an organism and that among the virtues there be one which dominates all the others, inspires, commands, animates, vivifies them, and makes all their efforts converge toward the supreme end. Is it not, then, in this supreme virtue in which all the other virtues ought to meet, that perfection chiefly consists? What is this supreme virtue?

The Essence of Perfection According to St. Paul's Interpretation of the Gospel

We shall see what answer Christian revelation gives to the question just stated. In the Gospel, on several different occasions and under the most varied forms, Christ incessantly reminds us that the supreme precept dominating all others and all the counsels is the precept of love, which had already been formulated in the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole

[12] Wisd. 4:12.

heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself." [13] This precept is superior to the ideal of the dominating fortitude of heroes and also to the Greek philosophers' ideal of speculative wisdom. In Christ's command is a fortitude of another order and a wisdom both much more realistic and far loftier. Sr. Paul explains this doctrine of our Savior when he writes to the Colossians (3:12-15): "Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy, and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience: bearing with one another, and forgiving one another . . . even as the Lord hath forgiven you . . . but above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body: and be ye thankful."

Charity is the bond of perfection because it is the highest of the virtues which unites our soul to God. It ought to last forever, and it vivifies all the other virtues by rendering their acts meritorious, ordaining them to the last end, that is, to its object: God loved above all else. Thus St. Paul is so convinced of this superiority of charity over all the other virtues, over the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and over the graces *gratis datae,* such as prophecy, that he writes: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I shotdd have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." [14]

Without charity, the most excellent extraordinary gifts (charismata) are of no avail for eternal life. Why is this? Because if I do not have charity, I do not fulfill the first commandment of God; I do not conform my will to His; I am turned away from Him, and my heart is set in the opposite direction from the heart of God. Therefore, "if I have not charity, I am nothing" personally in the order of salvation; I merit nothing, even though by preaching and miracles I should lead others to save their souls. With this meaning, St. Augustine says: "Love and do what you wish," and what you will do, will merit eternal life for you, if you truly love your God

[13] Luke 10:27; Ocut. 6:5.
[14] Sec I Cor. 13: 1-3.

more than yourself. Still more, we must have true charity, for there is nothing worse than the false, which has nothing in common with genuine charity except the name.[15]*

True charity, as opposed to false charity, implies all the virtues that are subordinate to it and that, from this point of view, appear as so many modalities or aspects of the love of God and of one's neighbor. This is why St. Paul says: "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." [16]

As a matter of fact, if after losing charity, we recover it by absolution, we receive with it all the infused moral virtues that are subordinate to it: Christian prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. To this we must add with St. Paul: "Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void or tongues shall cease or knowledge shall be destroyed. . . . We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. . . . And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." [17] Faith will disappear to give place to vision, hope to possession, but charity will last eternally.

[15] There exists, in fact, a false charity, made up of culpable indulgence, of weakness, such as the meekness of those who never clash with anybody because they are afraid of everyone. There is also a false charity, made up of humanitarian sentimentalism, which seeks to have itself approved by true charity and which, by its contact, often taints the true.

One of the chief conflicts of the present day is that which arises between true and false charity. The latter reminds us of the false Christs spoken of in the Gospel; they are more dangerous before they are unmasked than when they make themselves known as the true enemies of the Church. *Optimi corruptio pessima,* the worst of corruptions is that which attacks what is best in us, the highest of the theological virtues. The apparent good which attracts the sinner is, in fact, so much the more dangerous as it is the counterfeit of a higher good. Such, for example, is the ideal of the pan-Christians, who seek the union of the Churches to the detriment of the faith, which this union presupposes. If, therefore, through stupidity or more or less conscious cowardice, those who should represent true charity approve here and there the dicta of the false, an incalculable evil may result. This evil is at times greater than that done by open persecutors, with whom evidently one can no longer have anything in common.

[16] See I Cor. 13:4-7.

[17] *Ibid.,* 8, tif.

By charity we become the temples of the Holy Ghost: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." [18] Lastly, the more we love God, the more we know Him by that entirely supernatural, quasi-experimental knowledge that is divine wisdom. This is what made St. Paul say to the Ephesians (3:17-19): "Being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge; that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God."

St. Paul is speaking here not only to privileged souls, but to all the faithful. After meditating at length on these words in the presence of God, can we say that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is not in the normal way of sanctity? Care must be taken before formulating a negative proposition of this sort, for we must remember that reality, especially the reality of the interior life such as it is willed by God, is richer than even the best of all our theories. Philosophical and theological systems are often true in what they affirm and false in what they deny. Why is this? Because reality, as God made it, is far richer than all our limited and narrow conceptions.

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in our philosophy." [19]

To deny this would be to lose the meaning of the mystery, which is identified with contemplation. To deny it would be to impoverish singularly the words of St. Paul which we have just quoted: "Being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints," that is, with all Christians who reach perfection, "what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of the mystery of Christ . . . especially of His love, and "that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." [20]

St. John gives us the same doctrine, particularly in his First Epistle (4:16-21): "God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him. . . . And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother." Likewise St. Peter writes in his First Epistle (4:8): "But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity

18 Rom. 5:5.
19 Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act I, scene 5.
20 Cf. The Commentary of St. Thomas, *In Epist. ad Ephes.,* 3:17.

covereth a multitude of sins." Christ said of Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." [21]

According to this doctrine, perfection does not consist chiefly in humility, nor does it consist especially in poverty, nor in acts of worship or of the virtue of religion, but it lies primarily in the love of God and of one's neighbor, which renders the acts of all the other virtues meritorious. "Poverty itself," says St. Thomas, "is not perfection, but the means of perfection. . . . But since the means are sought not for their own sake, but for the sake of the end, a thing is better, not for being a greater instrument, but for being more adapted to the end. Thus a physician does not heal the more, the more medicine he gives, but the more the medicine is adapted to the disease." [22]

As much must be said of humility, which makes us bow before God that we may with docility receive His influence, which ought to lift us up to Him.[23]

The virtue of religion, which renders to God the worship due Him, is also inferior to the theological virtues; it is meritorious only by reason of the charity that animates it.[24] If we should forget this, we would perhaps become more attentive to worship, to the liturgy, than to God Himself, to the figures rather than to the reality, to the manner in which we ought to say an Our Father or a Credo rather than to the sublime meaning of these prayers: the service of God would take precedence over the love of God. Hence our conclusion is that, according to Christian revelation, charity is "the bond of perfection."

Some Exact Theological Statements on the Nature of Perfection

The scriptural teaching which we have just recalled assumes a more precise form in the doctrinal body of theology. Relying on the

21 Luke 7:47.

22 See IIa IIae, q. 188, a. 7 ad turn.

23 *Ibid.,* q. 161, a.5 ad zum: "Humility holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride (the source of all sin), which God resisteth, and makes man open to receive the influx of divine grace. . . .In this sense, humility is said to be the foundation of the spiritual edifice." (It is inferior to the theological virtues which unite us to God.)

24 The virtue of religion has for its immediate object, not God Himself but the worship which is due to (iod. This is why it is not a theological virtue, but is inferior to the theological virtues. Cf. *Stmrma,* IIa llae, q.81, a.5.

Scriptures, St. Thomas easily establishes the fact that Christian perfection consists especially in charity. "A thing is said to be perfect," he says, "in so far as it attains its proper end, which is the ultimate perfection thereof. Now it is charity that unites us to God, who is the last end of the human mind, since 'he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him' (I John 4:16). Therefore the perfection of the Christian life consists chiefly in charity." [25]

Infused faith and hope could evidently not be that in which perfection chiefly consists, for they can exist in the state of mortal sin, in a man whose will is turned away from God, his last end. They remain in him like the root of a tree which has been cut down and can revive. Not every mortal sin, in fact, makes a man lose faith and hope, but only a mortal sin that is directly contrary to these virtues. When the sinner who continues to believe and who still hopes, recovers charity, it revivifies faith and hope, and renders their acts not only salutary but meritorious, by ordaining them to God efficaciously loved above all else. St. Thomas adds farther on: "Primarily and essentially, the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, principally as to the love of God, secondarily as to the love of our neighbor, both of which are the matter of the chief commandments of the divine law. . . . Secondarily and instrumentally, however, perfection consists in the observance of the counsels." [26] The great sign of the love of God is precisely love of one's neighbor. Christ Himself says so, and we cannot insist too strongly on this point: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." [27] This love of our neighbor is the great sign of the progress of the love of God in our hearts, so much so that St. John adds: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." [28] "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. . . . Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." [29]

Farther on we shall speak of the counsels of poverty, chastity, and

25 See IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 1.
20 *Ibid.,* a. 3.
27 John 13:34 f.
28 See I John 2:9.
20 *Ibid.,* 3:14 f.

obedience; but even now it is clear that they are subordinate to charity, to the love of God and of one's neighbor in God.

We should like to insist here on two points that show the difference between Christian perfection on earth and perfection in heaven.

The Superiority of Charity to the Knowledge of God in This Life

Some intellectuals raise an objection to the traditional doctrine, based on Scripture, according to which perfection consists primarily in charity. They ask whether the intellect is not the first faculty of man, the one which directs the others and which primarily distinguishes us from the animal. Since this is true, they say, should we not then conclude that the perfection of man lies chiefly in the intellectual knowledge that he can have of all things, considered in their principle and in their end, and therefore in the knowledge of God, the supreme rule of human life? From this point of view, a Bossuet may seem to surpass a number of canonized servants of God who did not particularly excel in intelligence, as for example, a holy lay brother or a St. Benedict Joseph Labre.

We have already virtually cleared up this objection by pointing out in one of our previous chapters that speculative and abstract knowledge of God can exist without being accompanied by profound righteousness of the will. It may exist in a very intelligent but heartless man, who could not be called "a man of good will" in the meaning given to this term by the Gospel. For the same reason, infused faith can remain in a soul that has lost charity and has turned away from God. Moreover, we said with St. Thomas, that on earth the love of God is better than the knowledge of God.[30] It is important to insist on this point. St. Thomas clearly recognizes that the intellect is superior to the will which it directs. The intellect has, in fact, a more simple, more absolute, more universal object, being in all its universality, and consequently all beings; the will has a more restricted object, the good, which is a modality of being, and which is in everything the perfection that renders it desirable. Besides, we must not confound apparent good with true good, which

80 See Ia, q.82, a. 3. "Wherefore the love of God is better than the knowledge of God; but, on the contrary, the knowledge of corporeal things is better than the love thereof. Absolutely, however, the intellect is nobler than the will."

the intellect recognizes and judges, and proposes to the will. As the good presupposes the true and being, the will presupposes the intellect and is directed by it. Therefore by the intellect, which is the first of his faculties, man differs primarily from the animal.

St. Thomas admits also that in heaven our beatitude will consist essentially in the beatific vision, in the intellectual and immediate vision of the divine essence, for it is above all by this immediate vision that we shall take possession of God for eternity. We shall plunge the gaze of our intellect into the depths of His inner life seen directly. God will thus give Himself immediately to us, and we shall give ourselves to Him. We shall possess Him and He will possess us, because we shall know Him as He knows Himself and as He knows us. Beatific love will be in us a consequence of this immediate vision of the divine essence; it will even be a necessary consequence, for the beatific love of God will no longer be free, but superfree, above liberty. Our will will be invincibly ravished by the attraction of God seen face to face. We shall see His infinite goodness and beauty so clearly that we shall be unable not to love Him; we shall even be unable to find any pretext of momentarily interrupting this act of superfree love, which will no longer be measured by time, but by participated eternity, by the single instant of the immobile duration of God, the instant that never passes. In heaven the love of God and the joy of possessing Him will necessarily follow the beatific vision, which will thus be the essence of our beatitude.[31] All this is true. It is difficult to affirm more strongly than St. Thomas does the superiority of the intellect over the will in principle and in the perfect life of heaven.

Since this is true, how can the holy doctor maintain that Christian perfection on earth consists primarily in charity, which is a virtue of the will, and not in wisdom or contemplation, which belong to the intellect? To this question he gives a profound answer, which should be meditated on for the spiritual life. He says in substance: Although a faculty may by its nature be superior to another, it may happen that an act of the second is superior to an act of the first. For example, sight is superior to hearing, it is less painful to be deaf than blind; nevertheless, although sight is superior to hearing, the audition of a Beethoven symphony is more sought after than the sight of an ordinary object. Likewise, although rhe intellect

[31] See la Ilae, q.3, a.4; q. 5, a.4.

is by its very nature *{simpliciter)* superior to the will which it directs, here on earth the love of God is more perfect than the knowledge of God.[32] Therefore perfection lies chiefly in the love of God. A saint who has little learning in theological matters but who has a very great love of God, is certainly more perfect than a theologian who has a lesser charity. This observation, which is elementary for every Christian, appears upon serious reflection as a lofty and precious truth. It could be illustrated by many quotations from Scripture and from the works of the great spiritual writers, especially from *The Imitation of Christ.*

Whence comes this superiority of the love of God over the knowledge of Him that we have on earth? St. Thomas answers as follows: "The action of the intellect consists in this, that the idea of the thing understood is in the one who understands; whereas the act of the will consists in this, that the will is inclined to the thing as existing in itself. And therefore the Philosopher says *{Metaph.,* VI) that good and evil, which are objects of the will, are in things, but truth and error, which are objects of the intellect, are in the mind." [33] It follows that on earth our knowledge of God is inferior to the love of God, since, as St. Thomas further says,[34] when we know God, we draw Him in a way to ourselves, and in order to represent Him to ourselves, we impose on Him the bounds of our limited ideas; whereas when we love Him, it is we who are drawn to Him, lifted up to Him, such as He is in Himself. An act of love of God made by the Curé of Ars as he taught catechism, was worth more than a learned theological meditation inspired by a lesser love. Our knowledge of God draws Him to us, whereas our love of God draws us to Him. Therefore, as long as we have not the beatific vision, that is, while we are on earth or in purgatory, the love of God is more perfect than the knowledge of God. It presupposes this knowledge, but it surpasses it.

Further, says St. Thomas, even here on earth our love of charity attains God immediately;[35] it adheres immediately to Him, and from Him it goes on to creatures. "For knowledge begins from

[32] See la, q.82, a.3. On the contrary, it is better to know inferior things than to love them.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] Sec Ila llac, q. 17, a.4.

creatures, tends to God, and love begins with God as the last end, and passes on to creatures." 36 Finally, we love in God even that in Him which is hidden from us because, without seeing it, we are sure that it is Goodness itself. In this sense we can love God more than we know Him. We love even more what is most hidden in Him, for we believe that therein precisely lies His intimate life, which surpasses all our means of knowing: for example, what is most hidden in the mystery of the Trinity and in that of predestination. Therefore the love of God surpasses here on earth the knowledge of God. This is why theologians admire saints, such as St. Benedict Joseph Labre, who were only meagerly endowed with intellect, but who were consumed with zeal for the love of God and of souls.

This teaching is extremely beautiful, and shows us the superiority of charity over faith and hope, over all knowledge here on earth, even over the act of contemplation which proceeds from faith illumined by the gifts of understanding and of wisdom. This quasi-experimental knowledge of God still remains, in fact, essentially obscure; it does not grasp Him as He is in Himself, and it draws its delight from the very love which inspires it.37

We see more clearly why St. Paul says: "Charity is the bond of perfection." No other virtue unites us as intimately to God, and all the other virtues inspired and vivified by it, are ordained by it to God loved above all. We must, therefore, repeat with all tradition that the perfection of Christian life consists chiefly in charity, and in active charity, which unites us actually to God, in aridity as well as in consolation, and which fructifies in every kind of good work.38

30 *Ibid.,* ad turn.

37 *Ibid.,* q.45, a. 2,4.

38 See Col. 1:9. Thomists generally hold (cf. Passerini, *De statibus hominum,* in Ila Ilae, q. 184, a. 1) that perfection consists formally not in the *habitus* or virtue of charity, but in the activity of this virtue, which is morally continuous in the perfect. It is clear, in fact, that the virtue is ordained to its operation and that perfection is in actual union with God; "It is good for me to adhere to my God" (Ps. 72:28). St. Thomas says: "Man's third pursuit is to aim chiefly at union with and enjoyment of God" (Ila Ilae, q. 24, a.9).

On the contrary, the quietists, inclined to inaction, were disposed to say that perfection is not in the acts of charity, but in the *habitus* of charity, for, in their opinion, "velle operari active esc Deum offendere, qui vult esse ipse solus agens" (cf. Dcnzinger, no. 1222). They thus reached a pseudo-passive state, not infused but acquired and, what is more, acquired, not by acts but by the cessation of every act, by a sort of pious somnolence. Therein were

Charity ought, therefore, incontestably to have the first place in our soul, above that of the love of knowledge and of any kind of human progress. Moreover, charity will increase tenfold all our moral and intellectual powers by placing them in the service of God and of our neighbor. The love of esteem *(appretiative summus)* which we ought to have for God will thus become more intense, as it should.

The Love of Charity Cannot Be Absolutely Continual on Earth as It Will Be in Heaven

In comparing Christian perfection on earth with that of heaven, St. Thomas observes[38] that God alone can love Himself infinitely as much as He is lovable, as He alone can have a comprehensive vision of His essence. However, without loving God as much as He is lovable, the saints in heaven love Him with all their strength with an ever actual, uninterrupted love. This absolute continuity in love is not possible on earth; sleep, in particular, does not permit it.

The perfection possible on earth excludes everything that is contrary to the love of God, that is, mortal sin, and also all that hinders our love from being completely directed toward God. Thus those of the just who are called beginners and proficients tend toward this union with God, which is the possession of the perfect.[40]

According to these principles formulated by St. Thomas, the perfection of charity in the perfect excludes not only mortal sin and fully deliberate venial sin, but also voluntary imperfections,

two grave errors, which with one stroke of the pen suppressed asceticism and distorted mysticism.

An opposite excess to quietism would make perfection consist chiefly in the exterior activity of charity on behalf of one's neighbor. From this point of view, one might end by forgetting practically that the love of God is superior to that of one's neighbor, and that this second love is only the effect and sign of the first. One would thus unconsciously invert the order of charity.

Others, more attentive to the interior life than to its activity, aim too greatly at multiplying its acts, instead of tending to simplified affective prayer, which is, so to speak, the continuation of one and the same act, like a prolonged spiritual communion.

See IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 2.

[40] We treated this question in greater detail in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 167–75.

such as a lesser generosity in the service of God and the habit of acting in an imperfect manner *(remissa')* and of receiving the sacraments with little fervor of will. He who has a charity equal to five talents and acts as if he had only two talents still performs meritorious but weak acts. These acts of charity, called *remissi,* do not immediately obtain the increase of charity that they deserve,[41] and are not proper to the perfect, who ought indeed ever to advance more rapidly toward God, for the nearer souls approach Him, the more they are drawn by Him.[42]

St. Thomas[43] points out also that in the perfect, charity toward one's neighbor, the great sign of our love of God, extends not only to all in general, but as soon as the occasion presents itself to each of those with whom the perfect have relations, not only to friends but to strangers and even to adversaries. Moreover, this fraternal charity is intense in them, reaching even to the sacrifice of exterior goods and of life itself for the salvation of souls, since Christ said: "This is Aly commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." [44] We see this charity in the apostles after Pentecost, when they were "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." [45] This is also what made St. Paul say: "But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." [46]

Perfect charity demands serious effort, a veritable struggle, a spirit of abnegation or renunciation, in order that our affection, ceasing to descend toward the things of earth or to fall back egoistically on ourselves, may always rise more purely and strongly toward God. For this ascent toward God we need prayer, habitual recollection, a great docility to the Holy Ghost, and the generous acceptance of the cross which purifies. As soon as the soul's life ceases to descend, it ascends toward God. It cannot remain stationary on earth; and its law, like that of the flame which symbolizes it, is not the law of descent, but of ascent. Therefore, without having the absolute continuity of the love of heaven, the charity of the perfect

41 See Ila Ilae, q.24, a.6.
42 St. Thomas, *In Ep. ad Hebr.,* 10:25.
43 See Ha Ilae, q. 184, a. 2 ad juin.
44 John 15:12.
46 Acts 5:41.
40 See II Cor. 12:15. Cf. also Sr. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue,* chaps. 74, 78, 79, *passim;* Perfect love and its signs.

on earth is characterized by an admirable and almost ceaseless activity.

The author of *The Imitation* admirably expresses this thought when he says: "Because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee. Wherefore do Thou visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline. . . . A great thing is love, a great good in every way, which alone lighteneth all that is burdensome and beareth equally all that is unequal. It carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect. Love will tend upwards and not be detained by things beneath. Love will be at liberty, and free from all worldly affection that its interior vision be not hindered; that it suffer itself not to be entangled with any temporal interest, or cast down by misfortune. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant . . . for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free, and cannot be restrained. He giveth all for all, and hath all in all; because he resteth in one sovereign Good above all, from whom all good floweth and proceedeth. . . . Love often knoweth no measure, but groweth fervent above all measure. . . . Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not. When weary it is not tired; . . . but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upward and securely passeth through all." [47]

This is truly the life of the saints. We are called to it, for we are all called to the life of heaven where there will be only saints. In order to attain it, we must sanctify all the acts of our day, remembering that above the succession of daily deeds, whether pleasurable or painful, foreseen or unforeseen, there is the parallel series of

[47] *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. Ill, chap. 5. St. Thomas teaches that we cannot love God as much as He ought to be loved, or believe in Him or hope in Him as much as He deserves. Cf. Ta Ilae, q.64, a.4: "The measure and rule of theological virtue is God Himself. . . . So that never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved." Cf. Ila Ilae, 9-27, a.5.

See also Taulcr, *Sermons,* for the distinction between the upright man and the interior or spiritigtl man, and rhe description of the state of the perfect. Cf. *Sermons de Tattler* (trans. I iugueny, Théry, 1927), I, 200-4, 218-24, *165~* 69, 284,296 ff., 357.

actual graces which are granted to us from moment to moment that we may draw the best spiritual profit from these daily deeds. If we think about this, we shall no longer see these acts only from the point of view of the senses, or from that of our reason which is more or less led astray by self-love, but from the supernatural point of view of faith. Then these daily deeds, whether pleasurable or painful, will become the practical application of the doctrine of the Gospel, and gradually an almost continual conversation will be established between Christ and us. This will be the true interior life, as it were, eternal life begun.

CHAPTER IX

The Grandeur of Christian Perfection and the Beatitudes

CHRISTIAN perfection, according to the testimony of the Gospels and Epistles, consists chiefly in charity which unites us to God.[1] This virtue corresponds to the supreme precept of the love of God. We read also: "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him." [2] "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." [3]

Some theologians have questioned whether for perfection, properly so called, not that of beginners or of proficients, but that which characterizes the unitive way, a great charity is necessary, or whether this perfection can be obtained without a lofty degree of this virtue. Some authors doubt it.[4] They even declare that a high degree of charity is not necessary to perfection, properly so called, because, according to the testimony of St. Thomas, "the very least grace is sufficient to resist any degree of concupiscence." [6]

The majority of theologians answer, on the contrary, that perfection, properly so called, is obtained only after long exercise of the acquired and infused virtues, an exercise by which their intensity increases.® Before reaching the age of perfection, the perfect

1 St. Thomas, Ila, Ilae, q. 184, a. 1.

2 See I John 4:16.

8 Col. 3:14.

‘ Among them must be mentioned Suarez, *De statu perfectionis,* Bk. I, chap. 4, nos. 11, 12, 20. One can see why several of those who do not wish to admit that Christian perfection requires a great charity and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a proportionate degree, refuse also to concede that infused contemplation, which proceeds from living faith enlightened by the gifts, is in the normal way of sanctity and, as it were, the normal prelude of the beatific vision.

"See *III Sent.,* d.ji, q. 1, a.3, and also Illa, q.62, a.6 ad 31101.

"See Ila Ilae, q.24, a.9.

man must have been a beginner, then a proficient. In the perfect man, not only *can* charity conquer many temptations, but it has *in fact* triumphed over many, and has thereby notably increased. Therefore Christian perfection, properly so called, that of the unitive way, cannot be conceived without a lofty charity.[7]

If we were to read the contrary in the works of St. John of the Cross, for example, we would think we were dreaming and that there was a typographical error. It seems altogether certain that, as for adult age greater physical strength is needed than for childhood (although accidentally certain particularly vigorous adolescents may be stronger than certain adults), likewise for the state of the perfect a loftier charity is also needed than for that of beginners (although accidentally certain saints have a greater charity at the beginning than certain perfect souls already advanced in age).

The common teaching of theologians on this point seems clearly founded on the very preaching of the Savior, especially that of the beatitudes found in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. This page of the Gospel admirably expresses all the elevation of Christian perfection to which Christ calls all of us. The Sermon on the Mount is the abridgment of Christian doctrine, the solemn promulgation of the New Law, given to perfect the Mosaic Law and to correct erroneous interpretations of it; and the eight beatitudes given at its beginning, are the abridgment of this sermon. They thus wonderfully condense all that constitutes the ideal of the Christian life and show all its loftiness.

Christ's first preaching promised happiness and showed the means to obtain it. Why does He speak first of all of happiness? Because all men naturally wish to be happy. They pursue this end unceasingly, whatever they may wish; but they often seek happiness where it is not, where they will find only wretchedness. Let us listen to our Lord, who tells us where true and lasting happiness is, where the end of our life is, and who gives us the means to obtain it.

The end is indicated in each of the eight beatitudes. Under different names, it is eternal happiness, whose prelude the just may enjoy even here on earth; it is the kingdom of heaven, the promised land, perfect consolation, the full satisfaction of all our holy and legitimate desires, supreme mercy, the sight of God our Father. The means are quite the contrary of those suggested by the max-

[7] *Ibid.*, q. 184, a.i.

ims of worldly wisdom, which proposes an entirely different end.

St. Augustine and St. Thomas admirably explain the order of these eight beatitudes. An ascending order, it is the inverse of that of the Our Father, which descends from the consideration of the glory of God to that of our personal needs and of our daily bread. The first three beatitudes tell the happiness that is found in the flight from sin and deliverance from it, in poverty accepted for love of God, in meekness, and in the tears of contrition. The two following beatitudes are those of a Christian's active life: they correspond to the thirst for justice and to mercy exercised toward one's neighbor. Then come those of the contemplation of the mysteries of God: the purity of heart which prepares the soul to see God, and the peace which springs from true wisdom. Finally, the last and most perfect of the beatitudes unites all the preceding ones in the very midst of persecution endured for justice' sake. These are the final trials, the condition of sanctity.§

We shall follow this ascending order to get a precise idea of Christian perfection, taking care not to lessen it. We shall see that Christian perfection goes beyond the limits of asceticism, or of the exercise of the virtues according to our own activity, and that it implies the eminent exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The superhuman mode of the gifts, when it becomes frequent and manifest, characterizes the mystical life, or the life of docility to the Holy Ghost.

Following St. Augustine, St. Thomas teaches that the beatitudes are acts proceeding from the Holy Ghost or from the virtues perfected by the gifts.§

The Beatitudes of the Deliverance from Sin

The beatitudes of the deliverance from sin correspond to the purgative way, which is proper to beginners and which is pro-

§ In Luke 6:20-22, only four beatitudes are mentioned; but among them is found the highest, that of those who suffer persecution for justice' sake. It follows that of the poor, that of those who hunger after justice, and that of those who weep.

§ See la Ilae, q.69, a. 1. Cf. *Commentarium in Mattheum,* 5:3: "These merits (of the beatitudes) are cither acts of the gifts, or acts of the virtues according as they are perfected by the gifts." Following St. Augustine, St. Thomas indicates in this commentary on St. Matthew (chap. 5) the gift that corresponds to each beatitude. He does this also in rhe *Sumina,* where he speaks of the seven gifts in particular. We shall summarize this teaching here.

longed in the way the proficients and the perfect ought to follow. Whereas the world declares that happiness is in the abundance of exterior goods, of riches, and in honors, Christ states without any other preamble, with the calm assurance of absolute truth: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Each beatitude has many degrees. Happy they who are poor without murmuring, without impatience, without jealousy, even if bread should be lacking, and who work while placing their trust in God. Blessed are they who, though more fortunate, have not the spirit of riches, pomp, and pride, but are detached from the goods of earth. More fortunate still are they who will leave all to follow Christ, who will make themselves voluntarily poor, and who will truly live according to the spirit of this vocation. They will receive the hundredfold on earth and eternal life. These poor are they who, under the inspiration of the gift of fear, follow the road which, though narrow at first, becomes the royal road to heaven, on which the soul dilates more and more, whereas the broad road of the world leads to hell and perdition. Elsewhere Christ declares: "Woe to you that are filled: for you shall hunger." [10] On the other hand, blessed is that poverty which, as the life of St. Francis of Assisi shows, opens the kingdom of God that is infinitely superior to all wealth, to the miserable riches in which the world seeks happiness.

Blessed are the poor, or humble of heart, who do not cling to the goods of the body, or to those of the spirit, or to reputation, or to honor, and who seek only the kingdom of God.

The desire of riches divides men, engenders quarrels, lawsuits, violence, and war among nations; but Christ says: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." Blessed are they who do not become irritated against their brethren, who do not seek to take vengeance on their enemies, to dominate others. "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other." [11] Blessed are the meek who do not judge rashly, who do not see in their neighbor a rival to be supplanted but a brother to be helped, a child of the same heavenly Father. The gift of piety inspires this meekness in us with a filial affection toward God our common Father. The meek are not stubbornly attached to their own judgment; they express

10 Luke 6:25.
11 Matt. 5:39.

themselves quite simply in a straightforward manner, and do not feel the need to call heaven to witness in trivial matters.[12]*

To be thus supernaturally meek, even with those who are acrimonious, demands a great union with Him who said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart"; with Him who did not crush the broken reed or extinguish the smoking flax. According to Bossuet, the broken reed is sometimes our angry neighbor, who is broken by his own anger. We must not crush him by taking vengeance on him. Christ has been compared to the lamb which lets itself be led to the slaughter without uttering a complaint.

The meekness we are discussing is not that which does not offend anyone because it is afraid of everything; rather, it is a virtue which presupposes a great love of God and of one's neighbor, the flower of charity, as St. Francis de Sales says. This meekness doubles the value of the service rendered. Moreover, it succeeds in stating the whole truth, in making counsel and even reproaches acceptable; for he who receives them feels that they are inspired by a great love. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land, the true, promised land. Even now they possess spiritually the hearts that trust in them.

Whereas the world says that happiness lies in pleasures, Christ declares: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." To the evil rich man it was said: "Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."[18] Blessed are they who, like the beggar Lazarus, suffer patiently without consolation from men, for their tears are seen by God. More blessed still are those who weep for their sins, and through an inspiration of the gift of knowledge know experimentally that sin is the greatest of evils, and by their tears obtain its pardon. Lastly, more blessed, says St. Catherine of Siena,[14] are those who weep for love at the sight of the infinite mercy, of the goodness of the Savior, of the tenderness of the good Shepherd, who sacrifices Himself for His sheep. These receive even here on earth consolation infinitely superior to that which the world can give.

[12] //u'rf., 5:34.
[13] Luke 16:25.
[14] *Dialogue,* chap. 89.

Such are the beatitudes which are found in the flight and deliverance from sin.

The Beatitudes of the Active Life of the Christian

There are other holy joys which the just man finds when, freed from evil, he seeks the good with his whole heart. The man of action, who allows himself to be carried away by pride, declares that happy is that man who lives and acts as he pleases, who is not subject to anyone, and who imposes his will on others. Christ says: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." Justice, in the broad sense of the word, consists in rendering to God what is due Him, and then for the love of God giving also to the creature what is due him. In recompense, the Lord gives Himself to us. This is the perfect order, in perfect obedience that is inspired by love which enlarges the heart. Blessed are they who desire this justice, even to the extent of hungering and thirsting for it. In a certain sense, they will be filled even in this life by becoming more just and more holy. This is a blessed thirst, for Christ says: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith: Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [15] That we may keep this thirst when sensible enthusiasm falls away, and preserve this hunger and thirst for justice in the midst of contradictions, hindrances, and disillusions, we must receive with docility the inspirations of the gift of fortitude. This gift prevents us from weakening, from letting ourselves be disheartened, and it lifts up our courage in the midst of difficulties. St. Thomas says: "The Lord wishes to see us hunger and thirst for this justice to such an extent that we can never be satiated in this life, as the miser never has enough gold." These hungering souls "will be satiated only in the eternal vision, and on this earth in spiritual goods. . . . When men are in the state of sin, they do not experience this spiritual hunger: when they are free from all sin, then they experience it." [16]

In a Christian's action this hunger and thirst for justice should not be accompanied by a bitter zeal toward the guilty. Therefore Christ adds: "Blessed arc the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." In our

[15] John 7:37 f.
[16] St. Thomas, *In Matth,* 5:6.

life, as also in that of God, justice and mercy should be united. We cannot be perfect without going to the help of the afflicted, of the sick, as the good Samaritan did. The Lord will give the hundredfold to those who give a glass of water for love of Him, to those inviting to their table the poor, the crippled, the blind, who are mentioned in the parable of the guests. The Christian should be happier to give than to receive. He ought to pardon offenses, that is, to give to those who have offended him more than is due them; he ought to forget insults and, before offering his gift at the altar, go and be reconciled with his brother. The gift of counsel inclines us to mercy, makes us attentive to the sufferings of others, makes us find the true remedy, the word that consoles and uplifts.

If our activity were frequently inspired by these two virtues of justice and mercy and by the gifts corresponding to them, our souls would find even here on earth a holy joy and would be truly disposed to enter into the intimacy of God.

The Beatitudes of Contemplation and Union with God

Some philosophers have thought that happiness lies in the knowledge of truth, especially of supreme truth. This was the teaching of Plato and Aristotle. They were but little preoccupied with purity of heart, and their lives, on more than one point, were in contradiction with their doctrine. Christ tells us: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." He does not say that those are blessed who have received a powerful intellect, who have the leisure and means to cultivate it; but rather, blessed are the clean of heart, even though they may be naturally less endowed than many others. If they are clean of heart, they shall see God. A truly clean heart is like the limpid waters of a lake in which the azure of the sky is reflected, or like a spiritual mirror in which the image of God is reproduced.

That the heart may be pure, a generous mortification is prescribed: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. . . . If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off." [17] We must particularly watch over purity of intention: for example, not giving alms through ostentation, not praying to draw upon ourselves the esteem of men, but seeking only the approbation of "the Father who seeth in secret."

[17] Matt. 5:29 f.

Then will be realized the words of the Master: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome." [18]

Even here on earth, the Christian will, in a sense, see God in his neighbor, even in souls that at first seem opposed to God. The Christian will see God in holy Scripture, in the life of the Church, in the circumstances of his own life, and even in trials, in which he will find lessons on the ways of Providence as a practical application of the Gospel. Under the inspiration of the gift of understanding, this is the true contemplation which prepares us for that by which, properly speaking, we shall see God face to face, His goodness, and His infinite beauty. Then all our desires will be gratified, and we shall be inebriated with a torrent of spiritual delights.

This contemplation of God ought, even here on earth, to be fruitful. It gives peace, a radiating peace, as the seventh beatitude says: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, this beatitude corresponds to the gift of wisdom, which makes us taste the mysteries of salvation and see, so to speak, all things in God. The inspirations of the Holy Ghost, to which this gift renders us docile, gradually manifest to us the wonderful order of the providential plan even in those things, and at times especially in those things, which at first disconcerted us, in the painful and unforeseen events permitted by God for a higher good. One could not thus perceive the designs of Providence, which directs our lives, without experiencing peace, which is the tranquillity of order.

That we may not be troubled by painful and unexpected events, that we may receive all from the hand of God as a means or an occasion of going to Him, we need great docility to the Holy Ghost, who wishes to give us progressively the contemplation of divine things, the requisite for union with God. Hence we received in baptism the gift of wisdom, which has grown in us by confirmation and frequent Communion. The inspirations of the gift of wisdom give us a radiating peace, not only for ourselves but for our neighbor. They make us peacemakers; they help us to calm troubled souls, to love our enemies, to find the words of reconciliation which put an end to strifes. This peace, which the world cannot give, is the mark of the true children of God, who never lose the thought

[18] *Ibid., 6:21.*

of their Father in heaven. St. Thomas even says of these beatitudes: "They are a kind of preparation for future happiness." [19]

Lastly, in the eighth beatitude, the most perfect of all, Christ shows that all He has said is greatly confirmed by affliction borne with love: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The final trials especially, the requisites for sanctity, are indicated here.

Christ's surprising statement had never been heard before. Not only does it promise future happiness, but it declares that a soul should consider itself happy even in the midst of afflictions and persecutions suffered for justice. This is an altogether supernatural beatitude, which is practically understood only by souls enlightened by God. There are, moreover, many spiritual degrees in this state, from that of the good Christian who begins to suffer for having acted well, obeyed, and given good example, up to the martyr who dies for the faith. This beatitude applies to those who, converted to a better life, encounter only opposition in their surroundings. It applies also to the apostle whose action is hindered by the very people he wishes to save, when they will not pardon him for having spoken the Gospel truth too clearly. Entire countries sometimes endure this persecution, such as the Vendée during the French Revolution, Armenia, Poland, Mexico, and Spain.

This beatitude is the most perfect because it is that of those who are most clearly marked in the image of Jesus crucified. To remain humble, meek, and merciful in the midst of persecution, even toward persecutors, and in this torment not only to preserve peace but to communicate it to others, is truly the full perfection of Christian life. It is realized especially in the last trials undergone by perfect souls which God purifies by making them work for the salvation of their neighbor. All the saints have not been martyrs, but they have, in varying degrees, suffered persecution for justice' sake, and they have known something of that martyrdom of the heart which made Mary the Mother of Sorrows.

Christ insists on the reward promised to those who thus suffer for justice: "Blessed arc yc when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." These

[19] See Ia IIae, q.69, a. 1.

words of Christ kindled in the souls of the apostles the desire for martyrdom, a desire which inspired the sublime utterances of St. Andrew and St. Ignatius of Antioch. These words live again in St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and St. Benedict Joseph Labre. Inspired by these words, these saints were "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," and they built their houses not on sand but on rock, houses that have been able to weather all storms and have not been overthrown.

These beatitudes, which, as St. Thomas says,[20] are the superior acts of the gifts or of the virtues perfected by the gifts, go beyond simple asceticism and belong to the mystical order. In other words, the full perfection of Christian life belongs normally to the mystical order; it is the prelude of the life of heaven, where the Christian will be "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect," seeing Him as He sees Himself and loving Him as He loves Himself.

St. Teresa writes: "They read that we must not be troubled when men speak ill of us, that we are to be then more pleased than when they speak well of us; that we must despise our own good name, be detached from our kindred . . . with many other things of the same kind. The disposition to practice this must be, in my opinion, the gift of God; for it seems to me a supernatural good." [21] In other words, this disposition goes beyond simple asceticism or the exercise of the virtues according to our own activity or industry; it is the fruit of a great docility to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the saint says: "If a soul loves honors and temporal goods, it is in vain that it will have practiced prayer or rather meditation for many years; it will never advance very much. Perfect prayer, on the contrary, frees the soul from these defects." [22] This is equivalent to saying that without perfect prayer a soul will never reach the full perfection of Christian life.

The author of *The Imitation* also expresses the same idea when speaking of true peace: "If thou arrive at an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this thy earthly sojourn." [23] This is why, in the same book of *The Imitation,* the disciple asks for the superior

[20] *Ibid,* and *In Matth.,* 5:1 ff.
[21] *Life,* chap. 31, § *21.*
[22] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 12.
[22] *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. Ill, chap. 25.

grace of contemplation: "I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man nor anything created to hinder me. . . . He was desirous to fly freely to Thee who said, 'Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?' (Ps. 44:7.) . . . Unless a man be disengaged from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine. And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to secure themselves entirely from perishable creatures. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift it above itself. And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and free from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of no great importance." [24] This chapter of *The Imitation* belongs, properly speaking, to the mystical order; it shows that only therein is the true perfection of the love of God found.

St. Catherine of Siena speaks in the same way in her *Dialogue.*[25] As we have seen, this is the very teaching given us by Christ in the beatitudes, especially as St. Augustine [28] and St. Thomas understood them, that is, as the elevated acts of the gifts of the Holy Ghost or of the virtues perfected by the gifts. This is truly the full normal development of the spiritual organism or of "the grace of the virtues and the gifts." The beatitudes show it to us, not in an abstract and theoretical form, but in a concrete, practical, and vital manner.

[24] *Ibid.,* chap. 31.

[25] The *Dialogue,* chaps. 44-49.

[28] St. Augustine, *In sermonem Domini in monte* (Matt. 5). De *quantitate animae,* I, chap. 33; *The Confessions,* Bk. IX, chap. 10; *Soliloquia,* I, chaps. 1, 12 f.

CHAPTER X

Perfection and Heroic Virtue

TO COMPLETE what we have said about the grandeur or elevation of Christian perfection, we must see whether it essentially demands great charity and the practice of the virtues even to a heroic degree.

Does Perfection Necessarily Require Great Charity?

Certain theologians, such as Suarez,[1] have maintained that one can be perfect without great charity.[2] This proposition would greatly

[1] *De statu perfectionis,* Bk. I, chap. 4, nos. 11 f.

[2] Suarez *(loc. cit.)* says: "Perfection is posited in any suitable disposition or facility for acting perfectly according to the precepts and counsels of Christ; this good disposition can be obtained and subsist with greater and lesser intensity of charity, because it does not spring from intensity only, and although the intensity of charity helps much, what is lacking from that part can be easily supplied from another source." These last words, which would astonish us greatly if we were to find them in an article written by St. Thomas, mean, it seems, that the acquired virtues can easily supply for the lack of intensity of charity. Does this not notably diminish the supernatural character of Christian perfection?

Suarez adds *(ibid.,* no. 12): "A man can be holier in the sight of God and yet rather imperfect. . . . Nor is this unfitting, because true sanctity in the sight of God and the right to eternal beatitude depend on the degree of charity and grace. Moreover, perfection of this life depends on the disposition and inclination of a man to act in this life with promptness, ease, and purity of action."

A Thomist will say that, with an equal degree of habitual charity, one person is actually more generous than another who is content with imperfect *(remissi)* acts, or who having five talents lives as though he had only three. Further, with an equal degree of habitual charity and of actual generosity, one person will have fewer interior and exterior difficulties than another who easily avoids every misstep because he follows an easier road. But these are accidental things relative to a given individual, whereas we are treating here of perfection in itself and in general, and we arc considering whether it essentially demands a great charity, notably superior to that of beginners and to that of proficients.

astonish us if we were to find it in the works of St. Thomas or of St. John of the Cross, for it seems little in conformity with their principles. Yet it has been defended because, it has been said, the weakest charity can, according to St. Thomas, overcome all temptations, and because what is lacking in the intensity of charity can easily be supplied by the acquired virtues. Thus, according to this opinion, a person may be perfect without having great charity, and inversely he who has great charity may not be perfect, because he does not sufficiently govern his passions.

The common teaching is, on the contrary, that Christian perfection requires great charity. Why is this? The reason lies in the fact that perfection is obtained only after long exercise of the infused and the acquired virtues, an exercise by which these virtues increase more and more. And if at the beginning, "the weakest charity could overcome all temptations," [3] as time goes on it triumphs over them effectively and becomes more and more intense. It is inconceivable, therefore, that a Christian be perfect, that is, superior to beginners and proficients, without having great charity.

Nevertheless, perfection does not require a fixed intense degree of charity, as if mathematically determined and known to God alone. We do not find here the mathematical precision which is observed for the point of fusion of such or such bodies. We must judge spiritual perfection by analogy with maturity, which normally requires more physical strength than adolescence, without, however, exacting a mathematically determined degree of strength.

Moreover, this doctrine is based on the fact that charity increases, properly speaking, intensively rather than extensively.[4] In fact, even the slightest charity ought to extend to God and to all men, at least vaguely, without excluding anyone. Finally, we have seen that, according to St. Thomas, the three degrees of charity proper to beginners, proficients, and the perfect, are degrees of the intensity of this infused virtue, which more and more excludes deliberate venial sins and detaches us from earthly things in order to unite us more strongly to God. Thence it follows that Christian perfection essentially requires *(per se loquendo et non solum per accidens)* great charity.

But it may happen accidentally that a certain perfect Christian has

[3] St. Thomas, IIIa, q.62, a.6 ad 3um.
[4] See Ia IIae, q.24, a.4 ad 1um, 2um; a. 5 ad 2um.

a lesser degree of charity than a great saint has at the outset. St. Mary Magdalen could, immediately after her conversion, already have a higher charity than many perfect souls called to a lesser sanctity. Likewise in the corporeal order, it may happen accidentally that a certain especially vigorous youth is stronger than many grown men. But if it is a question of maturity in general and of perfection as such, prescinding from a given individual, it must be said that normally they require powers superior to the preceding age. It should also be observed that, with the same degree of habitual charity, one man avoids venial sin more than another, whether it is because the first has more actual generosity, or because he has fewer difficulties in his temperament, less work, fewer contradictions from men. St. Teresa remarks that, when she left her monastery to make a foundation, it happened that in the midst of unforeseen circumstances she committed more venial faults but also acquired more merits because of the difficulties to be overcome. The same is true when a man climbs a mountain: he stumbles from time to time, which he scarcely ever does on a level road, but he has the merit of a difficult ascent.

All these reasons show that, although accidentally a certain perfect soul may have a lesser charity than a certain beginner called to very high sanctity, perfection essentially requires great charity. It is obtained only after the conquering of many temptations and the acquiring of many merits. We read in the Book of Tobias (12:13): "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." The Scriptures also say: "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels; and the trial of affliction just men." [5] And our Lord says at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: "Everyone therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew; and they beat upon that house. And it fell not, for it was founded on a rock." [*] These words show that, although a weak charity can resist temptations, it is actually victorious over them only by increasing and becoming stronger and stronger. Therefore true Christian perfection of itself requires great charity. This truth is evident from the principles commonly accepted.

[6] Ecclus. 27:6.
[*] Matt. 7:24 f.

The teaching of St. John of the Cross confirms this doctrine. In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*[7] he writes as follows:

> Some consider any kind of retirement from the world and any correction of excesses to be sufficient; others are content with a certain degree of virtue, persevere in prayer and practice mortification, but they do not rise to this detachment, and poverty, or self-denial, or spiritual pureness. . . . They render themselves spiritually enemies of the cross of Christ, for true spirituality seeks for bitterness rather than sweetness in God, inclines to suffering more than to consolation, and to be in want of everything for God rather than to possess; to dryness and afflictions rather than to sweet communications, knowing well that this is to follow Christ and deny self, while the other course is perhaps nothing but to seek oneself in God, which is the very opposite of love. . . . Would that I could persuade spiritual persons that the way of God consisteth not in the multiplicity of meditations, ways of devotion or sweetness, though these may be necessary for beginners, but in one necessary thing only, in knowing how to deny themselves in earnest, inwardly and outwardly, giving themselves up to suffer for Christ's sake, and annihilating themselves utterly. He who shall exercise himself herein, will then find all this and much more. And if he be deficient at all in this exercise, which is the sum and root of all virtue, all he may do will be but beating the air; utterly profitless, notwithstanding great meditations and communications. . . . And when he [the spiritual man] shall have been brought to nothing, when his humility is perfect, then will take place the union of the soul and God, which is the highest and noblest estate attainable in this life.

Now this state, which is perfection, manifestly requires great charity together with the perfect humility spoken of in this passage. St. John of the Cross also says: "The state of perfection . . . consists in the perfect love of God and contempt of self." [8]

This doctrine, requiring great charity for perfection, is entirely conformable to what St. Thomas says of the seven degrees of humility. Following St. Anselm, he enumerates them as follows: (1) to acknowledge ourselves contemptible; (2) to grieve on account of this; (3) to admit that we are so; (4) to wish our neighbor to believe it; (5) patiently to endure its being said; (6) willingly to be treated as a person worthy of contempt; (7) to love to be treated

[7] Bk. II, chap. 7, *passim.*
[8] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. II, chap. 18.

in this fashion.[6] Such humility is truly perfection, or, as St. Thomas says, "the state of those who aim chiefly at union with and enjoyment of God: this belongs to the perfect who desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,"[10] and who do not recoil before hard things to be accomplished for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.[11] Perfection thus conceived evidently requires great love of God.

Can a person attain to a lofty degree of habitual charity without great effort and generosity, by long years of daily Communion and of rather weak meritorious acts, so that, with this lofty charity, he would remain notably imperfect through lack of generosity in combating inordinate passions? Some theologians seem inclined to think so, notably Suarez in the passages we quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This opinion comes from the fact that, in the question *De augmento caritatis,* Suarez holds that imperfect *(remissi)* acts of charity at once obtain the increase of charity which they merit. He is led thereby even to admit that Holy Communion, though received with little devotion, still obtains a notable increase of charity, and that by absolution lost merits are restored in the same degree, even if the attrition of the penitent is barely sufficient.

On all these points, St. Thomas and the ancient theologians consider far more the disposition of fervor of will required in the subject that there may be a notable increase of grace. In their opinion, imperfect acts of charity do not immediately obtain the increase of charity that they merit, but only when there is a serious effort toward good.[12] Likewise Holy Communion received with very little devotion obtains only a scant increase of charity, just as a person profits from the heat of a fireplace in proportion as he draws aearer to it instead of remaining at a distance.[13] Lastly, according to St. Thomas, by absolution lost merits are restored in the same degree only if the penitent has a contrition commensurate with his sin and with the graces lost.[14]

From what we have said, we conclude that without great effort a person cannot reach a high degree of charity by years of daily Communion and weakly meritorious acts. By such practices he can

6 See IIa IIae, q. 161, a.6.
10 Ibid., q.24, a. 9.
11 See *III Sent.,* d.29, a. 8, q. 1.
12 See IIa IIae, q.24, a.6 ad tum; Ia IIae, q. 114, a.8 ad jum.
13 See IIIa, q.79, a. 8.
14 Ibid., q.89, a. 2.

succeed in remaining in the state of grace or in rising rapidly after having sinned mortally, but certainly he cannot reach a lofty charity in this way.

Does Perfection Require the Heroic Practice of the Virtues?

If patriotism requires heroism when one's country is in danger, certainly Christian perfection requires the heroic practice of the virtues, at least *in praeparatione animi,* in this sense, that the Christian must be ready, with the help of God, to endure even martyrdom if it is a question of choosing between the denial of his faith and torture. This is necessary even for salvation,[15] and with still greater reason is required for perfection. In other words, a Christian who is faithful to his daily obligations should expect that in most difficult circumstances the Lord will give him help proportionate to the greatness of the duty. We read in the Gospel: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater." [16] "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul." [17] "Be not solicitous how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you must say." [18] "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [19] We must also love our enemies and come to their help if they are in grave need.

Moreover, St. Thomas [20] teaches that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary to salvation in order to prepare us to receive the special inspiration of the Floly Ghost with promptness and docility, especially when the acquired virtues and even the infused virtues do not suffice: that is, in the most difficult circumstances.

Since, according to these principles, every Christian must endure martyrdom rather than deny his faith or call it into question, what about the priest who has charge of souls? Even at the peril of his life he must bring the sacraments to those of the faithful entrusted to him when they are in grave necessity: for example, he must go and hear the confession of persons suffering from a contagious

IBSee Ila Ilae, q. 124, a. 1 ad 30m; q. 152, a.3 ad 211m.
19 Luke 16:10.
17 Matt. 10:28.
18 Luke 12:11 f.
??See II Tim. 3:12.
!<l See la Hac, q.68, a. 2.

disease. With even greater reason, a bishop is obliged, in certain circumstances, to give his life for his flock.

Nevertheless, to have heroism of the virtues *in praeparatione animi,* in the sense that we have just explained, does not mean that the soul possesses the virtues in the heroic degree. To prove heroic virtue, as Benedict XIV [21] explains, four conditions are necessary: (1) the matter, object of the virtue, must be difficult, above the common strength of man; (2) the acts must be accomplished promptly, easily; (3) they must be accomplished joyously, with the joy of offering a sacrifice to the Lord; (4) they must be performed rather frequently, when the occasion presents itself.

Does Christian perfection require the heroic degree of the virtues? In the following chapter we shall see that St. John of the Cross teaches that Christian perfection requires the passive purifications of the senses and of the soul, which do away with the defects of beginners and those of proficients.[22] Now, in these purifications or interior trials, the soul must often heroically resist temptations against chastity and patience, then against faith, hope, and charity. From this point of view, it seems evident, therefore, that Christian perfection requires a certain heroism of the virtues which can and ought, as time goes on, to continue to grow. This seems to be the opinion of St. Thomas,[23] when he describes the perfecting virtues and the perfect virtues; both are lofty and are not inferior to what Benedict XIV calls heroic virtues.[24]

21 *De servorum Dei beatificatione,* Bk. III, chap. 21.

22 *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps. 2-10; Bk. II, chaps. 1-5. St. John of the Cross here describes this purification as it occurs in contemplatives called to the highest perfection by the most direct route. There is, however, something similar in others, in whom these interior purifications are accompanied by the sufferings and difficulties of the apostolate.

23 See Ia IIae, q.61, a.5; IIIa, q.7, a.2 ad 2um.

24 St. Thomas *(ibid.)* thus describes the perfecting virtues: "Thus prudence, by contemplating the things of God, counts as nothing all things of the world and directs all the thoughts of the soul to God alone; temperance, so far as nature allows, neglects the needs of the body; fortitude prevents the soul from being afraid of neglecting the body and rising to heavenly things; and justice consists in the soul's giving a wholehearted consent to follow the way thus proposed."

The perfect virtues *(ibid.)* are even loftier and are the distinctive character of some very perfect servants of God ("some who are at the summit of perfection in this life"). St. Catherine of Siena expresses the same idea in her *Dialogue* (chap. 74), when she enumerates the signs of the charity of the perfect.

Lastly, it is certain that Christian charity, which is ordained to our configuration with the Savior crucified for us, ought for that very reason to tend to the heroic practice of the virtues. This may be deduced from what precedes: namely, since every Christian ought, in fact, to have the virtues in a heroic degree *in praeparatione animi* and to be ready, with the help of God, to endure even martyrdom rather than to deny his faith, this heroic act is not superior to that to which charity, or the love of God above all else, is ordained. By its very nature, this love prefers God to corporeal life and ought, therefore, to be disposed to the sacrifice of life, which is required in certain circumstances.

That Christian charity ought to tend to the heroic practice of the virtues appears also in the enumeration of the degrees of charity given by St. Bernard and explained by St. John of the Cross.[25] *"Amor Dei facit operari indesinenter et sustinere infatigabiliter."* This appears especially in the interior and exterior trials which the servants of God bear both for their personal purification and, following the example of the Savior, for their work for the salvation of souls.

The objection may be raised that, if this doctrine were true, many more Christians would reach heroism, for that to which charity is essentially ordained ought to be found in the majority. Heroism is rare.[26]

The answer to this objection must be that it is also rare for a person to spend his whole life in the state of grace, without ever sinning mortally, from the moment that he receives baptism; yet sanctifying grace, by its very nature, is ordained to eternal life and therefore to last forever, without ever being destroyed by mortal sin. But we have received this very precious treasure in a fragile vessel, and sensuality or pride may make us lose it. Though the human soul is essentially rational and immortal, and grace ought

25 *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. II, chaps. 19 f.

26 St. Thomas answers a similar objection in regard to the number of the elect (Ia, q.23, a.7 ad jum): "The good that is proportionate to the common state of nature is to be found in the majority and is wanting in the minority. The good that exceeds the common state of nature is to be found in the minority and is wanting in the majority. Thus it is clear that the majority of men have a sufficient knowledge for guidance of life; . . . but they who attain to a profound knowledge of things intelligible are a very small minority in respect to the rest." The human intellect is not incapable of knowing those things, but as a matter of fact few men reach this knowledge.

to make it live an essentially divine life (which the state of grace normally demands), many souls live only a life of sensibility, only a few live a life of right reason. Likewise, charity, which is in every Christian, as it is the seed of eternal life, tends by its very nature to heroism and, if circumstances so require, to the sacrifice of the present life in order to remain faithful to God. What the love of country requires in certain circumstances, the love of God and of souls requires even more.

As far as great sanctity is concerned, it manifests itself especially by the connection or harmony of even the most dissimilar virtues. One man may be inclined by nature to fortitude, but not to meekness; for another, the inverse is true. Nature is, so to speak, determined *ad ummi;* it needs to be completed by the different virtues under the direction of wisdom and prudence. Great sanctity is thus the eminent union of all the acquired and infused virtues, even of the most dissimilar ones, which God alone can so intimately unite. It is the union of great fortitude and perfect meekness, of ardent love of truth and justice and of great mercy toward souls that have gone astray. This union indicates a very close union with God, for what is divided in the kingdom of nature is united in the kingdom of God, especially in God Himself. Thus sanctity is a beautiful representation of the union of the most varied divine perfections, of infinite justice and infinite mercy in the eminence of the Deity or of the inner life of God. Christian martyrs manifest at one and the same time the greatest fortitude in their torments and the greatest meekness by praying for their executioners.[27] They are truly marked with the image of Jesus crucified.

[27] False martyrs, on the contrary, do not pray for their executioners. We do not see in these martyrs the connection between the most varied virtues; rather because of pride, their wills resist suffering, instead of abandoning themselves to God while seeking to save souls.

CHAPTER XI

Full Christian Perfection and the Passive Purifications

WE HAVE seen that Christian perfection consists especially in charity, which, more than any other virtue, unites us to God and to our neighbor in God. We must consider how perfection also requires the acts of the other virtues and of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.[1]

Acts of the Other Virtues Required for Perfection

Perfection also necessarily requires the acts of the other virtues which are of precept and which ought to be inspired, vivified, and rendered meritorious by charity.[2] Thus acts of faith, hope, religion,

[1] In this question, as in the preceding one, there are two deviations. The quietists seriously diminished the importance of the virtues which are distinct from charity. Quietism, properly so called, suppressed mortification (which is the exercise of the virtues of penance, temperance, and patience) and the exercise of the virtues relating to our neighbor. It fell into a false mysticism, declaring that a person must remain in obscure faith and pure love, without giving thanks to God, without addressing prayers of petition to Him, without gaining indulgences, without positively resisting temptations. Cf. Denzinger, nos. 1232-38, 1241, 1255-75, «3*7·

On the other hand, some authors have insisted on the exercise of the virtue of penance, on the interior and exterior acts of worship and those of fraternal charity, to the point of not recognizing in a sufficiently practical way the superiority of the love of God. This misplaced emphasis would lead either to an almost antimystical asceticism or to an excessively exterior apostolic life. It should not be forgotten that the interior life is the soul of the apostolatc.

[2] Cf. Passerini, O.P., *De statibus hominum,* in IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 1, no. 8: "Actual perfection consists *essentially,* not alone in the act of charity, but also in the acts of the other virtues governed by charity, in so far as they arc of precept."

Ibid., no. 10: "Actual perfection consists especially and principally in

prayer, assistance at Mass, Holy Communion, are of the essence of perfection. Assuredly, Christian perfection requires also essentially the acts of prudence, justice, fortitude, patience, temperance, meekness, and humility, at least the acts of these virtues which are of precept. We shall see that the supreme precept of love demands that we should always grow in these virtues as in charity.

The effective practice of the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience belongs only accidentally to perfection, as a precious but not indispensable instrument.[3] They are very useful means for the more certain and rapid attainment of perfection; but they are not indispensable means. A person may reach sanctity, as Blessed Anna Taigi did, in the married state and while retaining the right of ownership and the free use of the goods of this world. Yet a person must have the spirit of the counsels and not be attached to these earthly goods, but according to the expression of St. Paul, "use this world as if they used it not." [4] The three evangelical counsels invite us to renounce certain licit things, which, without being contrary to charity, more or less hinder its activity and its full development.[5] If, therefore, the effective practice of these counsels is not necessary to perfection, one must at least have their spirit of detachment in order to become more and more closely united to God.

From what we have said of the spiritual organism of the virtues and the gifts, we see that the full perfection of Christian life requires all the infused virtues connected with charity and also the

charity alone, in so far as charity perfects simply, the other virtues *secundum quid*. . . . Therefore actual perfection is formally in charity alone, which is the bond of perfection. . . . Nevertheless the other virtues pertain to the essence of perfection, as matter to the essence of a composite nature." *Ibid.*, p. 23, nos. 20 ff.: "The acts of the other virtures, as they are of counsel, are accidents of perfection."

By this distinction between what is of precept and what is of counsel in the virtues inferior to charity, Passerini brings to bear a precision which Cajetan had forgotten (in IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 1), and clearly states the thought of St. Thomas. Cajetan was accustomed to say: "Corrigendi videntur codices."

3 See IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3: "Primarily and essentially the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity. . . . Secondarily and instrumentally, however, perfection consists in the observance of the counsels."

4 See I Cor. 7:31. Cf. St. Thomas' Commentary on this Epistle.

5 St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 184, a.3: "The counsels arc directed to the removal of things that hinder the act of charity and yet arc not contrary to charity, such as marriage, the occupation of worldly business, and so forth."

acquired moral virtues which give the extrinsic facility of producing supernatural acts by removing the obstacles. It also requires the seven gifts, which, as we have seen, are connected with charity e and which consequently grow with it. Hence they are normally in a degree commensurate with that of this virtue.

We should, moreover, remember that normally the charity of the perfect ought to be greater and more intense than that of beginners and proficients, although accidentally a very generous beginner, called to become a great saint, may have a loftier charity than one of the perfect. From the natural point of view, there are in the same way little prodigies. The various ages of the spiritual life must be judged by what constitutes them as a rule, and not by an exceptional case. Normally greater vigor is required for adult age than for childhood; the same is true in the spiritual order.[7]

Thus we see that perfection is a plenitude which implies the exercise of all the virtues and also of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are in all the just. No one can be perfect without having, through the gift of understanding, a certain penetration of the mysteries of faith, and without having the gift of wisdom in a degree proportionate to charity, although this gift is found in some saints under a more clearly contemplative form and in others under a form more directed to action, to the apostolate, and to the works of mercy, as it was in St. Vincent de Paul who always saw in the poor the suffering members of our Lord.

Of this plenitude of the virtues and gifts, charity is the bond, to use the expression of St. Paul, "the bond of perfection." This ensemble is like a well-bound sheaf that is offered to God. Moreover, we can truly say with St. Thomas that perfection consists especially in charity, and principally in the love of God, although it necessarily demands also the other virtues and the seven gifts. Thus, although

• St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.68, a. 5.

7 Therefore we are surprised that Suarez (De *statu perfectionis,* Bk. I, chap. 4, nos. ii, 12, 20) should have maintained that a high degree of charity is accidentally proper to the perfect and that it may happen that a man who is holier than another, by reason of the intensity of his charity, may be less perfect than another. Normally this is not the case, but he who is holier may accidentally have temperamental or exterior difficulties which the other has not. Moreover, here it is a question of perfection according to the judgment of God, not according to the judgment of men, who sometimes characterize as humble one who is pusillanimous, and as proud one who is magnanimous, or inversely.

the human body is of the essence of man, his essence is constituted especially by the rational soul, which distinguishes man from the animal.

Evidently the state of grace and the charity of beginners do not suffice to constitute perfection, properly so called, but only perfection in the broad sense, which excludes mortal sin. One must then grow in charity to reach the spiritual age of the perfect. To attain it we need abnegation, a great docility to the Holy Ghost through the exercise of the seven gifts, and the generous acceptance of the crosses or purifications which should destroy egoism and self-love and definitely assure the uncontested primacy of the love of God, of an ever more radiant charity.

The Purifications Required for the Full Perfection of Christian Life

At this point, we must emphasize the purifications required for the full perfection of Christian life and speak of them in a general manner, drawing our inspiration from what St. Paul tells us about them, and then from St. John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church who has most profoundly studied this question of the purifications of the soul. If the Church proposes his teaching to us as that of a master, it is especially that we may gather from this teaching what is of primary importance in it. We shall, moreover, find in it a great light by which to distinguish the three ages of the spiritual life: that of beginners, that of proficients, and that of the perfect.

We should not forget the loftiness of Christian perfection, considered in its normal plenitude or its integrity. St. Paul contemplated it when he wrote to the Philippians: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings; being made comformable to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead. Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. . . . I do not count myself to have apprehended.

But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded. . . . Let us also continue in the same rule. . . . For many walk, of whom I have told you often, . . . that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, . . . who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven. . . . So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." [8]

St. Paul presents here a perfection that is not merely Platonic or Aristotelian, but Christian in the full sense of the word. This perfection St. Paul proposes not only to himself as the apostle of Christ, but to the Philippians to whom he writes, and to all of us, to all who will be nourished by his epistles until the end of the world. Such perfection evidently requires a great purification of the soul and an unusual degree of docility to the Holy Ghost.

It has been said that St. Thomas Aquinas wrote little about the purifications of the soul. Such a statement disregards what he wrote in his commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospel of St. John, when, carried away by the word of God, he rises toward the summits of the spiritual life which the great mystics love to describe. One should read in particular what he wrote on the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, which we have just quoted, about the desire to know Christ intimately and to be admitted to share in His sufferings, at least in order not to lose our crosses, in order to become comformable to Him, and to save souls with Him.® One should also read what St. Thomas wrote on these words of Christ that are recorded by St. John: "I am the true vine; and My Father is the husbandman. . . . Every branch that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit." [10] St. Thomas writes on this subject: "In order that the just who bear fruit, may bear still more, God frequently cuts away in them whatever is superfluous. He purifies them by sending them tribulations and permitting temptations in the midst of which they show themselves

[8] Phil. 3:8-20; 4: i.

[8] The world contains many lost or sterile crosses, such as that of the bad thief. These crosses could have been fruitful had they been borne with patience and love in union with our Lord, according to the words of St. Paul which we have just quoted: "In the fellowship of His sufferings."

[10] John 15: *i f.*

more generous and stronger. No one is so pure in this life that he no longer needs to be more and more purified." 11 These are the passive purifications of which St. John of the Cross spoke at great length.

We are concerned here with what is required to attain the summit of the normal development of charity. When we use the term "summit," we must not forget the word "normal"; and inversely, when we use the word "normal," we should not forget the word "summit." Frequently the term "normal" is applied to the state at which Christians as a rule actually arrive, and not sufficient attention is given to inquiring to what state they ought truly to reach if they were entirely faithful. Because the generality of Christian souls do not here on earth actually reach the stage of living in an almost continual union with God, we should not declare that this union is beyond the summit of the normal development of charity. We should not confound what ought to be or should be with what actually is: otherwise we would be led to declare that true virtue is not possible on earth, for, as a matter of fact, the majority of men pursue a useful or delectable good, such as money and earthly satisfactions, rather than virtuous good, the object of virtue.

In a society which is declining and returning to paganism, a number take as their rule of conduct, not duty, the obligatory good, which would demand too great effort in an environment where everything leads one to descend, but the lesser evil. They follow the current according to the law of the least effort. Not only do they tolerate this lesser evil, but they do it, and frequently they support it with their recommendations in order to keep their positions. They claim that they thus avoid a greater evil which others would do in their place if, ceasing to please, they should lose their situation or their command. And so saying, instead of helping others

11 See St. Thomas, *In Joannem,* 15:1: "'And everyone that beareth fruit. He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' In the life of nature it happens that a palm tree having many sprouts bears less fruit because of the diffusion of the sap to all the branches. Thus, in order that it may bear more fruit, cultivators trim away its superfluous shoots. So it is in man. Now, if in a man who is well disposed and united to God, his affection inclines to diverse things, his virtue decreases and he becomes more ineffective in doing good. And so it is that God, that the man may bring forth fruit, frequently cuts away impediments of this type and purges him, sending tribulations and temptations by which he may be made stronger for action. Therefore He says: 'He will purge him,' even if he is pure, because nobody is so pure in this life that he cannot be more and more purified."

to reascend they assist them in descending, trying only to moderate the fall. How many statesmen and politicians have come to this pass! A somewhat similar condition exists in the spiritual life.

At this point we are seeking to learn what should be the full normal development of charity, and not the level which this virtue as a general rule actually reaches in good Christians. To achieve our end, we must remember that the fundamental law of the normal development of charity is quite different from that of our fallen nature. While our nature, in so far as it remains wounded even after baptism, inclines us to weaken and to descend, grace, which regenerates us progressively, ever leads us to ascend and should finally "spring forth into eternal life" according to the words of Christ.

There is in our lives a light and shade that is at times striking. St. Paul often speaks of it when he opposes the flesh to the spirit, the light of God to the shades of death which would like to recapture us: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh (which here stands for wounded nature) lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another." [12] "Spirit" in this case means the spirit of the new man enlightened and fortified by the Holy Ghost.[13] Even in the baptized, concupiscence and many tendencies to sensuality, to vanity, and to pride remain. The love of God, which is in us, is still far from being victorious over all egoism, all self-love. A profound purification is then necessary; not only that which we must impose on ourselves, and which is called mortification, but that which God imposes when, according to Christ's expression, He wishes to prune, to trim the branches of the vine, that they may bring forth more fruit.

St. John of the Cross has shown this admirably. At the beginning of the prologue of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* he writes: "The dark night, through which the soul passes on its way to the divine light of the perfect union of the love of God, so far as it is possible in this life, requires for its explanation greater experience and light of knowledge than I possess. For so great are the trials, and so profound the darkness, spiritual as well as corporal, through which souls must pass if they will attain to perfection, that no human

12 Gal. *5:*16 f.
13 Rom. 8:4.

learning can explain them, nor experience describe them. He only who has passed through them can know them." The branch which God trims or prunes is not only a living but a conscious branch. To know the nature of this pruning, which is similar to that of a tree, one must have experienced it. Each one must carry his cross, and only after having borne it with love does he know clearly what the cross is.

Not without suffering indeed, is complete victory obtained over egoism, sensuality, laziness, impatience, jealousy, envy, injustice in judgment, self-love, foolish pretensions, and also self-seeking in piety, the immoderate desire of consolations, intellectual and spiritual pride, all that is opposed to the spirit of faith and to confidence in God, that a man may succeed in loving the Lord perfectly, with his whole heart, with his whole soul, with all his strength, and with all his mind, and his neighbor (enemies included) as himself.[14] Great firmness, patience, and longanimity are also needed to persevere in charity, whatever may happen, when the words of the Apostle are verified: "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [15]

We should not, therefore, be surprised that, when St. John of the Cross describes the road which leads most surely and most rapidly to the full perfection of Christian life, he declares that a soul could not reach it without undergoing the passive purification of the senses, which, in his opinion, marks the entrance into the illuminative way, and the passive purification of the spirit, which is at the threshold of the unitive way (if one understands the unitive way not in a diminished form, but according to its full normal development in the servants of God whom the Church proposes as models).

To show that the active purification which we impose on ourselves does not suffice, St. John writes: "For, after all the efforts of the soul, it cannot by any exertion of its own actively purify itself so as to be in the slightest degree fit for the divine union of perfection in the love of God, if God Himself does not take it into His

[14] Cf. Luke 10:27. Christ even tells us: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). When a person truly loves, if the occasion should arise of taking vengeance on an enemy, and he should ask himself: "Is asceticism or mysticism involved here?" the question would seem ridiculous and marked by an unbearable pedantry desirous, at any price, of classifying in one category or another what constitutes the very impulse of life toward God.

[15] See II Tim. 3:12.

own hands, and purify it in the fire, dark to the soul, in the way I am going to explain." 10 This statement shows clearly the necessity of the cross, which is affirmed by the Gospel and by all Christian spirituality. We use here, and do so throughout this work, deliberately simple but entirely traditional terms, in order to avoid all exaggeration.

The same master says: "Souls begin to enter the dark (passive) night when God is drawing them out of the state of beginners, which is that of those who meditate on the spiritual road, and is leading them into that of proficients, the state of contemplatives, that, having passed through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the divine union with God." 17

First of all, the soul is weaned from sensible consolations, which are useful for a time but become an obstacle when sought for themselves. Whence the necessity of the passive purification of the senses, which places the soul in sensible aridity and leads it to a spiritual life that is much more freed from the senses, the imagination, and reasoning. At this point the soul receives, through the gifts of the Holy Ghost, an intuitive knowledge which, despite a painful obscurity, initiates the soul profoundly into the things of God. At times this knowledge makes us penetrate them more deeply in an instant than would meditation over a period of months and years. To resist temptations against chastity or patience—temptations which present themselves rather frequently in this night of the senses—there are required at times heroic acts of chastity and patience, which are, however, extremely fruitful.

In the night of the senses there is a striking light and shade. The sensible appetites are cast into obscurity and dryness by the disappearance of sensible graces on which the soul dwelt with an egoistical complacency. But in the midst of this obscurity, the higher faculties begin to be illumined by the light of life, which goes beyond reasoned meditation and leads to a loving and prolonged gaze upon God during prayer.

After treating of this purification, St. John of the Cross says: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of beginners and proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation." 18 This text is among the most im-

" *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 3.

17 *Ibid.,* chap. 1.

Ibid., chap. 14: "Via iluminativa o de conrctnplaciôn infusa."

portant in all the writings of St. John of the Cross. Farther on we shall consider it again, and see its meaning and import more clearly.

But even after this purification, that the soul may be freed from the defects of proficients, from the subtle pride which subsists in them, another purification, that of the spirit, is needed.[18] This purification is found in far more advanced souls which ardently desire goodness, but which have too strong a desire that good be done by them or in their way. They must be purified from every human attachment to their judgment, to their excessively personal manner of seeing, willing, acting, from every human attachment to the good works to which they devote themselves. This purification, if well borne in the midst of temptations against the three theological virtues, will increase tenfold their faith, their confidence in God, and their love of God and neighbor.

This purifying trial presents itself under rather varied forms in the purely contemplative life and in that devoted to the apostolate. It differs also according as it is intended to lead the soul even here on earth to lofty perfection, or when it occurs only at the end of life to help souls to undergo, at least partially, their purgatory before death while meriting, while growing in love, instead of undergoing it after death without meriting. The dogma of purgatory thus confirms the necessity of these passive purifications of the senses and of the spirit.[20]

[18] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chaps, i and 2: In chapter 2, speaking of the imperfections of the advanced, St. John says they are "much more incurable than the others, because they consider them as more spiritual. . . . If that (divine union) is to be attained, the soul must enter the second night of the spirit. . . . There it will travel on the road of faith, dark and pure, the proper and adequate means of union." *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 18: On the ascending and descending fluctuations before the soul reaches the state of definitive peace, "the state of perfection, which consists in the perfect love of God, and contempt of self."

[20] Cf. *ibid.,* chap. 20. Sr. John speaks here of souls which "because of their perfect purification by God will not have to pass through purgatory."

According to St. John of the Cross, the full perfection attainable here below, is found only in the transforming union. Cf. *The Spiritual Canticle,* Stanza 22: "For in this state, the soul is no longer molested, either by the devil, or the flesh, or the world, or the desires, seeing that here is fulfilled what is written in the Canticle (2:11 f.): 'Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.' " The soul then finds a holy joy in suffering in union with our Lord *(ibid.,* stanza 24), all the virtues have reached their perfect development *(ibid.)* and also the gifts of the Holy Ghost (cf. *ibid.,* stanza 26, and *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chap. 1).

In this trial there is a light and shade superior to that of the night of the senses. The soul seems stripped of the lights and the facility to pray and to act in which it took satisfaction because of a remnant of self-love and pride. But a superior light appears in this night of the spirit; in the midst of temptations against faith and hope, appear little by little in all their relief the formal motives of the three theological virtues. They are like three stars of first magnitude: the first revealing truth, the helpful mercy, and the sovereign goodness of God. The soul comes to love God very purely with its whole heart; it becomes an adorer in spirit and in truth.

We shall, farther on, discuss this matter at greater length.[21] But what we have just said was necessary in order not to diminish the loftiness of the full normal development of Christian life. This summit, attainable here on earth, is, as we have seen, the one Christ Himself described at the beginning of His ministry in the evangelical beatitudes, expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. These beatitudes, especially the last one, go beyond the order of simple asceticism; they truly belong to the mystical order, like the passive purifications of which we have just spoken.[22]

Full Christian Perfection and Contemplation

This affirmation of St. John of the Cross, that the full perfection of Christian life requires the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit, is fraught with consequences. From this assertion it follows that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is in the normal way of sanctity, for, as St. John of the Cross [23] shows, it begins with the passive purification of the senses, in the aridity of the sensible faculties. It is commonly said that the roots of knowledge are bitter and its fruits sweet. As much must be said of the roots and fruits of infused contemplation. It would be a gross error to confound this contemplation with consolations, which do not always accompany it.

21 Ac the beginning of the third and fourth parts of this work.

22 The passive character of these purifications, as we shall see more clearly in what follows, belongs to an order superior to simple asceticism or the exercise of the virtues according to our own activity. We have treated this question at greater length elsewhere. Cf. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 146-78, and *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* II, 458-657.

The Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. I, chap. 9: The three signs of the passive purification of the senses.

No one any longer maintains that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is a grace *gratis data,* like prophecy and the gift of tongues. In the judgment of all, contemplation is attached to the order of sanctifying grace or "the grace of the virtues and gifts," and proceeds from faith illumined by the gifts of understanding and wisdom, from penetrating and savory faith.

Finally, if one cannot merit *de condigno* the actual efficacious grace of infused contemplation, it does not follow, as a result, that contemplation is not in the normal way of sanctity. Neither can the just man merit the grace of final perseverance (the state of grace at the moment of death, for this state is the very principle of merit); yet the grace of final perseverance is necessary to obtain eternal life. Likewise we cannot merit the efficacious grace which preserves us from monal sin and keeps us in the state of grace.[24] But these gifts, which the just man cannot merit, may be obtained by humble, trusting, and persevering prayer, for we read in Scripture: "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me."[25]

It is clear from what we have already said that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is morally necessary to full Christian perfection. Since, according to the Vatican Council (Denzinger, 1786), the revelation of the totality of the natural truths of religion is morally necessary that all these truths "may be easily known by all with firm certitude and without admixture of error," likewise very few Christians would reach perfection without infused contemplation, which proceeds from faith enlightened by the gifts. What is more, they would reach only a diminished perfection, and not the full Christian perfection which Christ spoke of in the Sermon on the Mount while preaching the beatitudes. As St. Augustine and St. Thomas say, the beatitudes are, in fact, the highest acts of the Christian virtues perfected by the gifts.[26]* The teaching of St. John of the Cross, which we stated above, thus fully conforms to what is said of the beatitudes in the Gospel, and to the way St. Augustine and St. Thomas understood them.

24 We have treated this point at greater length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 409 fff.

25 Wisd. 7:7.

26 Hardly any Thomists would wish to deny this proposition: "The full normal act of the gift of wisdom cannot be had without infused contemplation, which is properly called infused in so far as it cannot exist without the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost."

The author of *The Imitation* likewise says: "There are found so few contemplative persons because there are few that know how to separate themselves entirely from perishable creatures." [27] Here too, as St. Teresa observes, "Many arc called but few are chosen." [28]

Moreover, we must not confuse the question, "Is contemplation in the normal way of sanctity?" with the following: "Can all just souls actually attain to contemplation, no matter what their environment, their training, and direction?" Likewise, one should not confuse the question, "Is habitual grace essentially the germ of eternal life?" with this one: "Are all the baptized, at least the majority of them, saved?" or again with the following question: "Are the majority of those who have persevered for some years saved?"

Even if interior souls have good will, they may possibly not have all the generosity necessary to reach full perfection. The expression "full perfection" designates not only the essence but the integrity of perfection. That one may attain it, good training and direction are very useful, although God supplies these for very generous souls.

It should not be forgotten that the call to intimacy with God, like the call to Christian life, may be either general and remote, or individual and proximate. This last, in its turn, may be either sufficient or efficacious, and efficacious in regard either to the inferior degrees or to the highest degrees of union with God.

Lastly, in the works of authors such as St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, distinction must be clearly made, as is customary, between what is a general principle or at least a main conclusion, and what is only an answer to an accidental difficulty. Otherwise, one would confuse what ought to be with what actually is ideal perfection, and what is still far from it.

The loftiness of the end to be attained must not be lessened, but should be considered as it was set forth for us by Christ when He preached the beatitudes. As far as the means are concerned, prudence ought to propose them with the moderation that considers the diverse conditions in which souls find themselves, and according as they are among the beginners or the proficients. By so doing, the loftiness of the end to be attained is safeguarded, and also the realism of a truly practical direction. The greatness of the end to be pursued should certainly never be lost sight of.

27 *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. Ill, chap. 31.
28 *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 1.

CHAPTER XII

Perfection and the Precept of the Love of God

WE HAVE seen that Christian perfection consists principally in charity, and that Christ describes it for us in all its loftiness in the eight beatitudes. We must now ask whether Christian perfection thus conceived is only counseled for all Christians, or whether the supreme precept makes it their duty to strive for it. This is equivalent to asking the exact meaning and import of the double precept of the love of God and of neighbor.

Is the First Precept Without Limit?

Some have thought that for even the perfect observance of the supreme precept of the love of God and of neighbor, a high degree of charity is not necessary. From this point of view the precept would not be directed toward perfection; rather perfection would go beyond the precept and would consist in the accomplishment of certain counsels of charity, which would be superior to the first precept itself.[1] Were this so, the supreme precept would have a limit.

[1] This is the opinion expressed by Suarez, *De statu perfectionis,* chaps, II, nos. 15,16. He admits that St. Augustine and St. Thomas seem to teach clearly that perfection is not only counseled, but commanded by the first precept, as the end toward which all must tend. But he himself replies in the negative: "Respondeo nihilominus si proprie et in rigore loquamur, perfectionem supererogationis non solum non praecipi, ut materiam in quam obligatio praecepti cadat, verum etiam neque per modum finis in praeceptis contineri." Suarez thus admits, above the precept of the love of God, which in his opinion is limited, counsels of charity superior to those of poverty, chastity, and obedience, virtues which manifestly are inferior to charity. In his opinion, perfection consists, therefore, essentially in these counsels of charity, and instrumentally in the other three which are subordinated as means (cf. *ibid.,* no. 16).

This doctrine of Suarez is criticized at length by the great canonist Passerini, O.P., who was also a profound theologian and most faithful to

This may seem true if we consider the matter superficially. In stating this problem, St. Thomas carefully notes this likelihood, remarking by way of difficulty or objection: "If, therefore, the perfection of the Christian life consists in observing the commandments, it follows that perfection is necessary for salvation, and that all are bound thereto; and this is evidently false." [2] St. Thomas answers this objection in a manner that is both simple and profound, by declaring that all are obliged in a general way to tend to perfection, each according to his condition, without being obliged to be already perfect. It is surprising to find that modern theologians, and not the least among them, failing to comprehend the doctrine of the greatest masters on this fundamental point of spirituality, have turned this objection into their very thesis.

St. Thomas shows plainly that the supreme precept obliges all in a general way to tend toward the perfection of charity, at least according to the common way, although the vows of religious oblige only those who have made them to tend to this perfection according to the special way of their vocation.

The holy doctor offers the following explanation: "It is written (Deut. 6:5): 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart,' and (Lev. 19:18): 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor (Vulg., friend) as thyself'; and these are the commandments of which our Lord said (Matt. 22:40): On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.' Now, the perfection of charity, according to which the Christian life is said to be perfect, consists precisely in loving God with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore it seems that perfection consists in the observance of the precepts (and not precisely in the fulfillment of the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience).

"Perfection is said to consist in a thing in two ways: in one way,

Sr. Thomas. Cf. his *De hominum statibus et officiis,* in IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3, nos. 70, 106, where he shows that this doctrine of Suarez is opposed to that of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas which was preserved by St. Antoninus, Cajetan, and Valentia. St. Thomas occasionally uses the expression "perfection of supererogation," but in a different sense from that in which Suarez uses it. When St. Thomas uses the phrase, he means that the three evangelical counsels of poverty, absolute chastity, and obedience are not obligatory.

The sound basis of Passerini's conclusion will be easily seen by examining St. Thomas' article, IIa IIae, q. 184, a.3, which we arc going to translate.

[2] See IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3,2a obj.; "Whether perfection consists in the observance of the precepts or of the counsels."

primarily and essentially, in another, secondarily and accidentally. Primarily and essentially the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity; primarily in the love of God, and secondarily in the love of our neighbor. This charity is the object of the two chief precepts of the divine law. Now, the love of God and of our neighbor is not commanded according to a measure, so that what is in excess of the measure be a matter of counsel. This is evident from the very form of the commandment, pointing, as it does, to perfection, for instance in the words, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart (where is the limit?): since *the whole* is the same as *the perfect,* according to the Philosopher *(Phys.* Ill, text. 64), and in the words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' since everyone loves himself most *(maxime)*? The reason for this is that the 'end of the commandment is charity' according to the Apostle (cf. I Tim. 1:5). Now, the end does not present itself to the will in a fragmentary manner, but in its totality. In this it differs from the means. Either a person wills the end, or he does not will it; he does not will it by halves, as the Philosopher observes *(Polit.,* 1:6). Thus a physician does not measure the amount of his healing, but how much medicine or diet he shall employ for the purpose of healing. Consequently it is evident that perfection consists essentially in the observance of the commandments; wherefore Augustine says *(De perf. justit.,* VIII): 'Why, then, should not this perfection be prescribed to man, although no man has it in this life?'[4]

"Secondarily and instrumentally, however, perfection consists in the observance of the counsels; in other words, they are only precious instruments to attain it. In fact, all the counsels, like the commandments, are ordained to charity, with one difference, however; the commandments, other than the two great precepts of love, are intended to remove whatever is contrary to charity, whatever might destroy it; while the end of the counsels is to remove whatever

[3] In fact, everyone ought, through charity, to wish for himself salvation, eternal life, and not only an inferior degree of glory, but eternal life without setting any limit; for we do not know to what degree of glory God wishes to raise us.

[4] St. Augustine means that even the perfection of heaven falls under the precept of the love of God, not as something to be realized immediately, but as the end toward which one must tend. It is thus that Cajctan explains it (Commentary on Ila Ilae, q. 184, a. j).

hinders or prevents the perfect exercise of charity without, however, being opposed to it, as for example, marriage, the necessity of being occupied with secular affairs, and things of this sort. This is what Augustine teaches *(Enchir.,* chap. 21): 'Precepts . . . and counsels . . . are well observed when one fulfills them in order to love God and one's neighbor for God in this world and in the next.' " [5]

St. Thomas adds that this is why the abbot Moses says *(Conferences of the Fathers,* Bk. I, chap. 7): "Fasts, vigils, meditation on Holy Scripture, penury, and the loss of all one's wealth are not perfection but means to perfection, since not in them does perfection consist, but by them one attains it" e more rapidly and more surely.[7] A man can be voluntarily poor for other than a religious motive, through philosophical scorn of wealth, for example; likewise one can be poor for love of God, as St. Francis was, but this is not indispensable to perfection. Thus a soul may reach sanctity in the married state without the effective practice of the counsels, but on condition that it have the spirit of the counsels, which is the spirit of detachment from worldly goods for love of God.

All this shows that perfection lies principally in the more and more generous fulfillment of the supreme precept, which has no limit. No one can find a limit in the statement in Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole strength," [8] and not by halves. In other words, all Christians to whom this precept is addressed, must, unless they already have the perfection of charity, at least tend toward it, each according to his condition, whether it be in the married state or in the sacerdotal life or in the religious state. For all, it is not only better to tend toward this perfection of charity, it is a duty identical with that of continually advancing toward heaven where the love of God will reign fully, a love which nothing will any longer be able to destroy or render tepid.

[5] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] This is what our Lord had in mind when He said to the rich young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). As St. Thomas remarks *(loc. cit.,* ad mm), this is the road which leads to perfection; and then he explains that perfection consists in following Jesus through love.

[8] Dcut. 6:5; Luke 10:27.

The Love of God Does Not Consist in a Golden Mean

As this heading declares, the doctrine, that the supreme precept has no limit, is greatly confirmed if we consider that the end in question here is not an intermediary end, such as health, but the last end, God Himself, who is infinite good. If a sick person desires health without limitations, with greater reason we should desire the love of God, without limiting our desire to a certain degree. We do not know the degree to which God wishes to lead us and will lead us if we are faithful and generous. St. Thomas says: "Never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved, or believe and hope in Him as much as we should." [9] In contrast to the moral virtues, the theological virtues do not consist essentially in a happy mean: their object, their formal motive, their essential measure is God Himself, His infinite truth and goodness.

We are far from the *aurea mediocritas* of which Horace spoke. As an Epicurean, he even seriously reduced the golden mean of the moral virtues. The truly golden mean of these virtues is not only that of selfish calculation, which, without love of virtue, avoids the disadvantages of vices that are opposed to each other; the truly golden mean is already a summit, that of right reason and of virtuous good loved for itself, over and above the useful and the delectable. But this summit has not an infinite elevation; it is the reasonable rule determining the measure of our acts in the use of exterior

presence of certain dangers we must be courageous and even not fear death if our country is in danger; but to expose ourselves to death without a just motive would not be courage but temerity. Moreover, there are some sacrifices that our country cannot rightly require of us. Our country is not God, and consequently cannot demand that we love it above all else, sacrificing to it our Christian faith, the practice of the true religion, and our eternal salvation. Such a course of action would be an excessive love of country.

But, over and above the moral virtues, the theological virtues, which have God immediately as their object and motive, cannot essentially consist in a golden mean. We cannot love God too much, believe too greatly in Him, hope too much in Him; we can never

[9] See Ia IIae, q.<$4, a.4: "Whether the theological virtues observe the mean."

love Him as much as He should be loved. Thus we see more clearly that the supreme precept has no limit. It asks us all ever to strive here on earth for a purer and stronger love of God.

If hope is the mean between despair and presumption, this is not because the presumptuous man hopes too greatly in God, but because he displaces the motive of hope by hoping for what God could not promise, such as pardon without true repentance. Likewise, credulity does not consist in believing too greatly in God, but in believing what is only human invention or imagination as if it were revealed by Him.[10][11]

We cannot believe too strongly in God, or hope too greatly in Him, or love Him too much. To forget, as the Epicureans do, that the rational, golden mean is already a summit, and to wish to make the theological virtues consist essentially in a golden mean as the moral virtues do, is characteristic of mediocrity or tepidity, erected into a system under pretext of moderation. Mediocrity is a mean between good and evil and, indeed, nearer evil than good. The reasonable, golden mean is already a summit, that is, moral good; the object of the theological virtues is infinite truth and goodness. This truth has at times been brought into refief by the comparison between the mediocre man and the true Christian.[11]

[10] *Ibid.:* "It is possible to find a mean and extremes in theological virtue, accidentally (not essentially) and in reference to us" (i.e., faith is *per accidens* a mean between incredulity and credulity, hope between despair and presumption).

[11] Cf. Ernest Hello, *L'homme,* Bk. I, chap. 8: "The truly mediocre man admires everything a little and nothing with warmth. . . . He considers every affirmation insolent, because every affirmation excludes the contradictory proposition. But if you are slightly friendly and slightly hostile to all things, he will consider you wise and reserved. The mediocre man says there is good and evil in all things, and that we must not be absolute in our judgments. If you strongly affirm the truth, the mediocre man will say that you have too much confidence in yourself. The mediocre man regrets that the Christian religion has dogmas. He would like it to teach only ethics, and if you tell him that its code of morals comes from its dogmas as the consequence comes from the principle, he will answer that you exaggerate. . . . If the word 'exaggeration' did not exist, the mediocre man would invent it.

"The mediocre man appears habitually modest. He cannot be humble, or he would cease to be mediocre. The humble man scorns all lies, even were they glorified by the whole earth, and he bows the knee before every truth. . . . If the naturally mediocre man becomes seriously Christian, he ceases absolutely to be mediocre. . . . The man who loves is never mediocre."

The Duty of Advancing on the Way to Eternity

Finally, another reason why the precept of love has no limit is found in the fact that we are travelers on the way to eternity, and that we advance by growing in the love of God and of our neighbor. Consequently our charity ought always to grow even to the end of our journey. Not only is this a counsel, that is, something better, but an obligation. Moreover, a soul here on earth not desirous of growing in charity would offend God. The road to eternity is not made to be used as a place for rest or sleep, but rather to be traveled. For the traveler who has not yet reached the obligatory end or term of his pilgrimage, progress is commanded and not only counseled, just as a child must grow, according to the law of nature, under pain of becoming a dwarf, a deformed being.[12] Now, when it is a question of advancing toward God, it is not by the movement of our bodies that we advance, but rather spiritually, by the steps of love, as St. Gregory the Great says, by growth in charity which ought to become a purer and stronger love. This is what we ought especially to ask in prayer; this is the import of the first petitions of the Our Father.

Does it follow that a person who does not yet fulfill the precept perfectly, transgresses it? Not at all; for, as St. Thomas says, "To avoid this transgression, it is enough to fulfill the law of charity to a certain extent as beginners do.

"The perfection of divine love falls entirely *{universaliter)* within the object of the precept; even the perfection of heaven is not excluded from it, since it is the end toward which one must tend, as Augustine says *{De perfectione justitiae,* chap. 8; *De Spiritu et littera,* chap. 36). But a person avoids the transgression of the precept by putting into practice a little love of God.

"Now, the lowest degree of the love of God consists in loving nothing more than God or contrary to God or equal with God, and he who has not this degree of perfection in no wise fulfills the commandment. There is another degree of charity which cannot be realized in this life and which consists in loving God with all our strength, in such a way that our love always tends actually toward Him. This perfection is possible only in heaven, and therefore the fact that a person does not yet possess it, entails no transgression of

«See Ha Ilae, q. 184, a.j ad juin.

the commandment. And, in like manner, the fact that a person has not attained the intermediate degrees of perfection, entails no transgression, provided only that he reaches the lowest degree." 13

But evidently he who remains in this lowest degree does not fulfill the supreme commandment in all its perfection: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind."

It would be an error to think that only imperfect charity is of precept, and that only the degrees of this virtue superior to the lowest degree are of counsel. They fall under the precept, if not as something to be realized immediately, at least as that toward which we must tend.14 Thus, by virtue of the law of his development, a child must grow in order to become a man, otherwise he would not remain a child, but would become a deformed dwarf. The same is true in the spiritual life.15 The law of growth has serious demands. If the divine seed, placed in us by baptism, does not develop, it runs the risk of dying, of being choked out by weeds, as we read in the parable of the sower. In the spiritual life these abnormal souls are certainly not the true mystics, but the retarded and the lukewarm.

Perfection is an end toward which all must tend, each according to his condition. This capital point of spiritual doctrine, forgotten by some modem theologians, was highlighted in 1923 by Pius XI in his encyclical *Studiorum ducem,* in which he presents St. Thomas to us as the undisputed master not only of dogmatic and moral theology, but also of ascetical and mystical theology. Pius XI draws particular attention to the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, namely, that the perfection of charity falls under the supreme precept as the end toward which every Christian must tend according to his condition in life.16

13 *Ibid.,* ad zum.

14 This is the opinion of Cajetan (Commentary on Ila Ilae, q. 184, a. 3) and also of Passerai, *De hominum statibus et officiis,* on Ila Ilae, q. 184, a. 3, nos. 70, 106.

15 St. Thomas, *loc. cit.,* ad 311m.

16 *Studiorum ducem,* June 29, 1923: "That the love of God ought always to grow was most certain doctrine. 'This is evident from the very form of the commandment, pointing, as it does, to perfection. . . . *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.* . . . The reason of this is that *the end of the commandment is charity,* according to the Apostle (I Tim. 1:5); and the end is not subject to a measure, bur only such things as are directed to the end' (Ila Ilae, q. 184, a.3), This is why the perfection of charity toward

That same year Pius XI, in another encyclical, recalled the fact that St. Francis de Sales taught the same doctrine.[17]

Three consequences, which we shall develop farther on, result from this doctrine: (i) In the way of salvation, he who does not advance, goes back. Why is this so? Because it is a law that one must always advance, under penalty of becoming a retarded soul, just as a child who does not develop as he should, becomes abnormal. (2) The progress of charity should indeed be more rapid in proportion as we approach nearer to God, who draws us more strongly. Thus the movement of a falling stone is so much the more rapid as the stone approaches the earth which attracts it. (3) Lastly, since such is the loftiness of the first precept, assuredly actual graces are progressively offered to us proportionate to the end to be attained, for God does not command the impossible. He loves us more than we think. In return, we must give Him our love.

When we have succeeded in loving Him with all our heart, even with an affective love, we must love Him with all our soul, with an effective love, with all our strength, when the hour of trial strikes for us, and finally, with all our mind, progressively freed from the fluctuations of the sensible faculties, that, henceforth spiritualized, we may become truly "adorers in spirit and in truth."

All this doctrine shows that sanctification must not be too greatly separated from'salvation, as is done by those who say: "I shall never

which everyone must tend according to his condition, falls under the precept."

17 In this encyclical, written for the third centenary of St. Francis de Sales, January 26, 1923, we read: "Christ constituted the Church holy and the source of holiness, and all those who take her for guide and teacher must, according to the divine will, aim at holiness of life: 'This is the will of God,' says St. Paul, 'your sanctification.' What type of sanctity is meant? Our Lord Himself explains it in the following manner: 'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Let no one think that this invitation is addressed to a small, very select number and that all others are permitted to remain in a lower degree of virtue. As is evident, this law obliges absolutely everybody without exception. Moreover, all who reach the summit of Christian perfection, and their name is legion, of every age and class, according to the testimony of history, have experienced the same weaknesses of nature and have known the same dangers. St. Augustine puts the matter clearly when he says: 'God does not command the impossible, but, in giving the commandment, He admonishes us to accomplish what we can according to our strength, and to ask aid to accomplish whatever exceeds our strength.' " Concerning this doctrine, see St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. Ill, chap. 1.

become a saint; it is enough for me to be saved." This statement contains an error of perspective. Progressive sanctification is, in reality, the way of salvation. In heaven there will be only saints, and, in this sense of the word, each of us must strive for sanctity.

CHAPTER XIII

Perfection and the Evangelical Counsels

WE HAVE seen that in virtue of the supreme precept all the faithful must tend to the perfection of charity, each according to his condition or state in life. In addition, we have seen that no one can reach Christian perfection without having the spirit of the evangelical counsels, which is the spirit of detachment spoken of by St. Paul when he says that we should use the goods of this world as though not using them: in other words, without fixing our affections on them, without settling ourselves on this earth as if we were going to live here forever. We must not forget that we are all travelers on the road to eternity, and that we must all grow in charity until we reach the end of our journey. This is a general obligation springing from the first precept. Moreover, by reason of a particular vocation, certain souls have a special obligation to tend toward perfection according to a particular kind of life. This is the case with the priest, that he may be the worthy minister of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also the case with religious who are not priests, because of their vows or promises not only to live according to the spirit of the counsels, but effectively to practice the counsels of poverty, absolute chastity, and obedience. We shall now discuss the effective practice of these three counsels in relation to Christian perfection and to the healing of our moral wounds.

The Three Evangelical Counsels and the Wounds of the Soul

Christ said to the rich young man mentioned in Sr. Matthew's Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven. And come, follow

A4e." [1] The Evangelist adds: "When the young man had heard this word, he went away sad, for he had great possessions."

The effective practice of the three evangelical counsels is not obligatory nor is it indispensable to reach the perfection toward which we must all tend, but it is a most suitable means more surely and rapidly to reach the end and not run the danger of stopping halfway. We have said that a soul cannot reach perfection without having the spirit of the counsels, or the spirit of detachment. Now, it is difficult truly to have this spirit without the effective practice of this detachment, which seemed too hard to the rich young man. Sanctity can be attained in the married state, as we see from the lives of St. Clotilde, St. Louis, and Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, but it is more difficult and more rare to reach it by this common road. It is not easy to have the spirit of detachment in regard to worldly goods, permitted pleasures, and our own will, if, in reality, we do not effectively detach ourselves from them. The Christian who lives in the world is often exposed to excessive absorption and preoccupation about a situation to be acquired or maintained for himself and his family. He is also in danger of forgetting to some extent that he must advance toward another life, another fatherland, and that to reach it, something is needed quite different from the understanding of worldly affairs: in other words, the help of God, which should be sought through prayer, and the fruit of grace, which is merit. In family life he is also inclined to dwell on affections in which he finds a legitimate satisfaction for his need of loving. He is also led to forget that he must above all things love God with his whole heart, with his whole soul, with all his strength, and with his whole mind. Frequently charity is not in him a living flame which rises toward God while vivifying all other affections; instead, it is like a burning coal which slowly dies out under the ashes. This explains the ease with which a number of these Christians sin, scarcely reflecting that their sin is an infidelity to the divine friendship, which should be the most profound sentiment in their hearts.

Lastly, the Christian living in the world is often exposed to doing his own will, side by side, so to speak, with the will of God. After giving a few moments to prayer on Sundays and weekdays, he may organize his life from rhe simple, natural point of view in accordance with his reason which is more or less deformed by self-love

[1] Matt. 19:21.

and the prejudices or conventions of his environment. Then faith seems at times reduced to a number of sacred truths that have been memorized, but have not become truths of life. The understanding is then too much preoccupied with earthly interests, sometimes with diversions; should difficulties demanding great moral energy arise, the spirit of faith is often found wanting. The great truths about the future life, about the helps that come to us from Christ, remain practically inefficacious, like distant truths that have never been assimilated and are lost in the depths of the heavens. Practical faith is lacking then, a faith that would cause the light of the mysteries of salvation to descend into the midst of the difficulties of daily life.

Such are evidently the dangers which the Christian encounters when he does not seek to practice effectively the evangelical counsels in the measure possible to him. If he fails in this matter, he will go astray and fall progressively into three moral maladies radically opposed to the three counsels. St. John speaks of these evils when he says: "For all that is in the world (or according to its spirit) is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world." [2] They are three purulent wounds which ravage souls and bring death to them by turning them away from God.

These three moral wounds appeared in the world after the sin of the first man and our repeated personal sins. To understand their gravity, we should recall the fact that they replace in many souls the triple harmony that existed in the state of original justice. It is this triple harmony that Christ wishes precisely to re-establish by the three evangelical counsels. Originally, on the first day of creation there was perfect harmony between God and the soul, between the soul and the body, between the body of man and exterior goods. Harmony existed between God and the soul, since it is created to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, and by this means to obtain eternal life.

The first man, who was created in "the state of sanctity and original justice," was a contemplative who conversed familiarly with God, as we read in the first chapters of Genesis. His soul found its principal nourishment in divine things, "a little less than the angels." [8]

[a] See I John i: t6.
[•] Ps. 8:6.

In the light of God, he considered all things, and he obeyed the Lord.

From this superior harmony came that which existed between the soul and the body, which was made to serve the soul. Since the soul was perfectly subordinated to God, it had dominion over its body. The passions or movements of the sensible appetites followed with docility the direction of right reason enlightened by faith and the impelling force of the will vivified by charity.

Finally, there was harmony between the body and exterior goods. The earth produced its fruits spontaneously without the necessity of being worked painfully; the animals were docile, or at least did no harm to man, who had received dominion over them.

Sin disturbed this triple harmony by destroying the highest of the three; it introduced the triple disorder, called by St. John "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Man revolted against the law of God; and the human soul, thenceforth inclined to pride, has often repeated: "I will not serve." The soul has ceased to nourish itself with divine truth, and instead conceives its own narrow, false, ever-changing, little ideas. It wished to make for itself its own truths and principles, and to direct itself alone, limiting as far as possible the authority of God, instead of receiving from Him the salutary direction which alone leads to true life. Refusing to submit to the dominion of God, the soul has lost control over its body and its passions, which were made to obey the reason and will. What is more, the soul has often made itself the slave of the body, of its lower instincts: this is the concupiscence of the flesh. Many people so far forget their divine destiny as to be occupied from morning to night with their bodies, which become their idols. Their passions reign as masters; the soul becomes their slave, for passions that are antithetic, love, jealousy, anger, hatred, follow each other in the soul in spite of it. Instead of directing these passions, the soul is carried away by them as by wild horses which no longer know the bit.

Finally, the body, instead of making use of exterior goods, becomes their slave; it overtaxes itself at times to obtain an abundance of these exterior goods. It surrounds itself with useless luxury, to the detriment of the poor who arc hungry. It must have all that glitters

and makes a man seem important: this is the concupiscence of the eyes. After accumulating a fortune, many men are wholly absorbed in the care of maintaining and increasing it. Slaves to their business, they never find time to pray, to read a page of the Gospel, to feed their souls. They settle down here on earth as if they were going to stay here always, with hardly any concern for their salvation.

This triple slavery, which replaces the original triple harmony, is order overthrown. Christ came to restore the order that had been destroyed; with this end in view, He gave us the three evangelical counsels.

The Three Evangelical Counsels and the Restoration of Original Harmony [4]

Divine Providence sent our Lord to restore the primitive order. This restoration appeared first in the very person of Jesus, and should continue in the Church, which ought to shine with the splendor of the mark of sanctity. In His humanity Jesus was the model of all the virtues, the eminent exemplar of all sanctity. His humanity was consecrated to God in the first instant of His conception by substantial union with the Word, and thus received an innate, substantial, uncreated sanctity. It is impossible to think of a more intimate, more indissoluble union with God than the personal, hypostatic union of the human nature and the divine nature in the person of the Word made flesh. As a result, the humanity of the Savior is consecrated to God in all its faculties and acts, to such an extent that His intellect is infallible and can see things only in the divine light, to such a degree that His will is absolutely impeccable, and that His most pure sensibility cannot know any disorder. All the acts of the holy soul of Christ are of God, come from God, go to God; nowhere is the sovereign domain of the Most High exercised with so absolute a plenitude.

Because the humanity of Christ is thus radically consecrated to God, it is separated from the spirit of the world and is given to the world to save it and deliver it from its spirit of blindness, concupiscence, and pride. Christ's very elevation separates Him from the spirit of the world, from all that is evil or less good. By this innate

[4] St. Thomas, *Stmrrna,* la Ilae, q.u>8, a.4; Ila Ilae, q. 186, a.3, 4, 5, 7.

elevation, Christ is detached from worldly goods, honors, and mundane affairs; the model of poverty, He had not "whereon to rest His head." By the elevation of His spirit, Christ is also detached from the pleasures of the world, free from the demands of a family, that He may found a universal family, the Church. In this He is the model of religious chastity, which is the condition of His universal, spiritual paternity. Finally, by His supernatural elevation, Christ is detached from all self-will. At the age of twelve Fie declares that He must be about His Father's business, and He is "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."

Because the Savior comes from above, His very elevation separates Him from all that is inferior. It separates Him thus, not that He may be isolated but that He may act on the world from a great height, and that His action may be more universal and more profound. It is like that of the sun when it reaches its zenith. Because Jesus was free from all the bonds which attach man to his individual goods, to his family, to his petty personal ideas, He could act, not only on the men of one country or one period, but on the entire human race to which He brings eternal life. The Gospel has not grown old; it is of the present time, belonging to the very actuality of God. It is a sign that Jesus was not of the world, but was given to the world to save it.

We see thus in our Lord the restoration of the original harmony, a restoration so splendid indeed that it considerably surpasses the perfection of the first man. There "where sin abounded, grace did more abound." This restoration of the primitive order should continue in the Church, which should shine with the splendor of the mark of sanctity. Christ willed that His Church should be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Its sanctity must be striking and manifest, not only at great intervals in certain heroic souls like the martyrs and the great canonized saints, but in a permanent manner in religious institutions and families, where a great number of souls go for training in sanctity, and make profession to imitate Christ, His spirit of detachment from the things of the world and of union with God. Nevertheless, no matter how generous these souls are, there is a great difference between them and our Lord. He came from above, and was separated from the spirit of the world by His very elevation; they come from below, from the region of sin and falsehood. They must gradually detach themselves from it in order to consecrate themselves ever more intimately to God.

To souls which have received this special vocation, Christ proposes not only that they live according to the spirit of the three evangelical counsels, but that they practice them effectively, and He promises them the hundredfold in return. He invites them to a triple separation in view of a triple consecration which will more and more assure in them the growth of the highest virtues: of faith, hope, and charity; in other words, of union with God.

In the use of worldly goods, He counsels restraint that they may not be led into excess. He invites them to practice poverty, to separate themselves from the free use and even from the possession of exterior goods, and to consecrate these goods to God that they may no longer be an obstacle, but a means in the journey towards eternity. He invites them to absolute chastity, that is, to renounce completely the pleasures of the senses, and to consecrate their bodies and hearts to God that these may no longer be an obstacle, but a means vivified by grace. He invites them, finally, to holy obedience, to free themselves from all self-will, so easily capricious and rebellious, in order that their wills may no longer be an obstacle but a means more and more supernaturalized by charity, with a view to union with God which will daily grow closer and stronger.

The practice of these three virtues and of the corresponding vows is not exempt from difficulties, but it suppresses many others. The bird bears its wings, but still more the wings support the bird. In like manner, the religious virtues and the three vows impose special obligations, it is true; but, above all, they bear souls toward the perfection of charity over a more rapid and a more sure road.

The three virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience are called religious or holy virtues because they are subordinated to the virtue of religion, which renders to God the worship that is due Him. By reason of its object, the worship due to the Lord, the virtue of religion is the first of the moral virtues; it takes its place immediately after the three theological virtues and infused prudence which directs it. It offers to God the acts of the three religious virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. To make certain of not turning back, the religious binds himself by the three corresponding vows, a triple engagement or promise to practice these three virtues, first for a time, then until death, following the example of Christ, who was obedient "unto death, even to the death of the cross." As the Savior offered Himself, the religious offers himself also in union

with Him, giving his entire life as an oblation or sacrifice. Since the religious ought to offer everything,—exterior goods, body, heart, will, personal judgment—this sacrifice, if well made and not revoked as time goes on, truly deserves the title of holocaust. It ought to be lived daily in an ever more intimate manner; then it obtains the hundredfold promised by the Savior, who declared: "Amen, I say to you, there is no man who hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for My sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much, now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, life everlasting." [6]

We shall see farther on that faith is the soul of holy obedience and that the practice of this virtue makes the spirit of faith grow. We shall likewise see that hope or trust in God is the soul of holy poverty, which obliges us to rely on the help of God, and that charity is the soul of holy chastity, which, when practiced in all its delicacy, makes the love of God and of souls in God flourish in us.

[6] Mark 10:29 f.

CHAPTER XIV

The Special Obligation of the Priest and the Religious to Tend to Perfection

SINCE we have spoken of the general obligation by which every Christian, according to his condition, must tend to perfection in virtue of the supreme precept of the love of God, it seems fitting to treat briefly the special obligation which exists on this point for the religious and for every priest, whether he has made the vows of religion or not. We must show here especially how the virtue of religion ought ever to be increasingly under the influence of the virtue of charity, of a stronger and purer love of God.

The Nature of This Special Obligation for Religious

This obligation is based on religious profession; the grace of religious profession is not transitory but permanent if the religious is faithful. As St. Thomas says: "Properly speaking, one is said to be in the state of perfection, not through making an act of perfect Ipve, but because he binds himself permanently and with a certain solemnity to what leads to perfection." [1] "Both these conditions are competent to religious and bishops. For religious bind themselves by vow to refrain from worldly affairs, which they might lawfully use, in order more freely to give themselves to God. . . . In like manner, bishops bind themselves to things pertaining to perfection, when they take up the pastoral duty, to which it belongs that a shepherd 'lay down his life for his sheep.' " [2]

Strictly speaking, the religious thus makes "profession to tend toward perfection." "Not as though I had already attained," says St. Paul, "or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by

1 See Ila Ilae, q. 184, a.4.
2 *Ibid.,* a. 5.

any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus." [3] As a result, the religious does not commit a sin of hypocrisy because he is not perfect, but he would commit it if he did not tend more sincerely to perfection. In his case, this special obligation is identified with that of observing his three vows and his rule.[4] But this obligation must always be considered in its relation to the general obligation based on the great precept of the love of God and one's neighbor. When this is done, the religious life keeps all its loftiness and appears not only under its canonical or juridical aspect, but with its great spiritual meaning.

From this point of view, we see the true import of this principle, which must not be understood in a material and mechanical fashion by multiplying the vows without reason: "It is better and more meritorious to do one and the same deed with a vow than without." [6] It does not follow from this statement that vows should always be multiplied in order to have greater merit; but the religious ought to observe his three vows better and better by more profoundly penetrating the three following reasons given by St. Thomas in the section where he explains this principle:

1) The vow is an act of the virtue of religion or of *latria* which is superior to the virtues of obedience, chastity, and poverty; the acts of these virtues it offers as worship to God.

2) By a perpetual vow, especially if it is solemn, man offers to God not only an isolated act, but the faculty itself. It is better to give the tree with its fruits than to offer the fruits alone.

3) By the vow, the will fixes itself firmly and irrevocably in the good. It is more meritorious to act thus, just as, on the other hand, it is more grave to sin by a will that is obstinate in evil.

When a person lives according to this spirit, he grasps more and more concretely and vividly what theology teaches: namely, that by the three vows, which belong to the very essence of the religious state, the religious, as St. Thomas shows,[®] separates himself from what would hinder his affections from being wholly directed toward God. If he does not take back his offering, he offers himself totally to the Lord as a holocaust. His state is thus a state of separation from

[3] Phil. 3:12.
[4] Cf. Salmanticenscs, *Thcol. woralis,* IV, *De statu religioso, initio,* nos. 20-25.
[5] *Sunnna,* IIa line, <[.88, a.6.
[6] *Ibid.,* q. 186, a. 7.

the world, especially from the spirit of the world, and a state of consecration to God.

Three things especially may hinder his affection from being completely directed toward God: the concupiscence of the eyes or the desire of exterior things, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life, the love of independence. These he renounces by his three vows; then he offers to God exterior goods through poverty, his body and his heart through religious chastity, his will through obedience. He has nothing more that he can offer and, if in reality he does not take back what he has given, but practices ever more perfectly, with a greater love of God and of his neighbor, the three virtues corresponding to the three vows, he truly offers to God a perfect sacrifice meriting the name of holocaust. His life is thus, with the Divine Office, the daily accompaniment of the Sacrifice of the Mass. His life is an act of worship, and even an act of *latria* offered to God by the virtue of religion. This is true especially if the religious, far from taking back his gift once he has bestowed it, often renews his promises with greater merit than when he made them for the first time. In fact, merit grows in him with charity and the other virtues, and thereby his consecration to God becomes increasingly intimate and complete.

What is the end of this triple renunciation and triple oblation or consecration? St. Thomas[7] answers that it is union with God, which ought daily to become more intimate, and, as it were, the prelude of eternal life. The religious ought to reach it by the imitation of Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Christ, as man, was completely separated from the spirit of the world, and as united to God as is possible. By the grace of personal union with the Word, His nature was wholly consecrated, His intellect rendered infallible, His will impeccable; in Him all thoughts, every act of the will, and all the emotions of His sensibility were from God and were directed to God. The sovereign dominion of God has never been as completely exercised as in the sacred humanity of the Savior.

Now, the religious makes profession to follow Him; but, whereas

[7] *Ibid.,* <3.184, a-5: "For religious bind themselves by vow to refrain from worldly things which they might lawfully use, in order more freely to give themselves to God, wherein consists the perfection of the present life."

Christ came from above, the religious comes from below, from the region of sin, and he must separate himself progressively from all that is inferior in order to consecrate himself more and more intimately to God. Then will be realized in him the exhortation of St. Paul: "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory." [8]*In his commentary on this epistle, St. Thomas says: "Do not taste the things of the world, for you are dead to the world; your life is hidden with Christ. He is hidden as far as we are concerned because He is in the glory of God His Father, and likewise the life which comes to us from Him is hidden, according to these words of Scripture: 'O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee' (Ps. 30:20). 'To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him . . . a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it' " (Apoc. 2:17).

This spiritual manna, remotely symbolized by the manna of the desert, is the food of the soul; it is infused contemplation, which proceeds from living faith illumined by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thus, says St. Thomas, the active life (or the exercise of the moral virtues) disposes to the contemplative life of union with God,[9] and especially, "virginity is directed to the good of the soul in respect of the contemplative life." [10] As a result, every religious life tends to the more and more perfect fulfillment of the precept of divine love and to very close union with God.

Therefore it is advisable always to consider the special obligation of the religious to tend to perfection in its relation to the general obligation which is based on the supreme precept of love. The latter rises far above the three evangelical counsels, since they are only means or instruments to reach more rapidly and surely the per-

[8] Col. 3:1-4.

[9] See IIa IIae, q. 182, a.4: "The active life precedes the contemplative life because it disposes one to it."

[10] *Ibid.,* q. 152, a.4.

fection of charity or close union with God, which radiates on one's neighbor in a way that is increasingly fruitful.[11]

Thus, under the inspiration of the three theological virtues, the three religious virtues find full exercise. A very close bond is established between them; so truly, it has been said, that the hope of eternal beatitude is as the soul of holy poverty, which abandons earthly goods for those of eternity. Charity is the soul of religious chastity, which renounces an inferior love for a much higher one. Faith is the soul of obedience, which fulfills the orders of superiors as if they were revealed by God Himself. Thus the religious life leads truly to contemplation and to close union with God.

The Special Obligation of the Priest to Tend to Perfection

Since a religious (even a simple lay brother or a sister) has a special obligation to tend to perfection, with even greater reason the same obligation holds for a priest, even though he is not a religious. True, the priest who lives in the midst of the world is not, properly speaking, in the "state of perfection"; if he became a religious, he would have an additional merit, that of the vows of poverty and obedience.[12] Nevertheless he ought to tend to perfection, properly so called, by reason of his ordination and of his holy functions, which demand a greater interior sanctity than that required by the religious state [13] in a lay brother or a sister. This special obligation is not distinct from that of accomplishing holily and worthily the various duties of the priestly life. In virtue of the supreme precept, they must even be fulfilled more and more perfectly with the progress of charity, which ought to grow until death.

The basis of this obligation is ordination to the priesthood and the lofty character of the acts for which it is conferred. This ordination requires, not only the state of grace and special aptitudes, but an initial perfection *(bonitas vitae)* superior to that required

[11] *Ibid.,* q. 184, a. 3: "Primarily and essentially, the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, principally as to the love of God, secondarily as to the love of our neighbor, both of which are the matter of the chief commandment of the divine law. . . . Secondarily and instrumentally, however, perfection consists in the observance of the counsels . . . which are directed to the removal of things that hinder the act of charity."

[12] *Ibid.,* a. 6.

[13] *Ibid.,* a. 8.

for entering religion.[14] The priest, in fact, ought to enlighten others, and it would be fitting that he himself should be in the illuminative way, as it would be fitting that the bishop should be in the unitive way of the perfect.

In addition, the effects of ordination are the sacerdotal character, an indelible participation in the priesthood of Christ, and sacramental grace, which makes possible the fulfillment of the priestly functions in a holy manner, as should be the case in a worthy minister of Christ.[15] This sacramental grace is like a modality which is added to sanctifying grace, and which gives the right to receive actual helps for the holy, and indeed for the increasingly holy, accomplishment of the acts of the priestly life. This grace is like a feature of the spiritual countenance of the priest, who ought to become a minister ever more conscious of the greatness and the holy exigencies of his priesthood.

Priestly ordination is certainly superior to religious profession, and the special obligation of tending to perfection which it establishes is surely not less. This is why during the ceremony of ordination the bishop tells the candidate for the priesthood that he must henceforth "study to live in a holy and religious manner, and to please God in all things." If even every one of the faithful, each according to his condition, must, by reason of the supreme precept of the love of God, tend to the perfection of charity, with even greater reason is this true of the priest. We read in St. Matthew: "For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound."[16]

Speaking on this subject to the minister of God, the author of *The Imitation of Christ* says: "Thou art made a priest and art consecrated to celebrate. See now that faithfully and devoutly, in due time, thou offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou show thyself blameless. Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound by a stricter bond of discipline and obliged to greater perfection of sanctity. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues and set the example of a good life to others. His conversation should not be with the popular and common ways of man, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth."[17]

[14] *Ibid.,* q.189, a. i ad jum; 184, a. 7 f.; *Supplement,* q.36, a. 1, 3; q.40, a.4.
[15] *Ibid., Supplement,* q.35, a. 1, 2.
[16] Matt. 13:12.
[17] *The Imitation,* Bk. IV, chap. y.

In relation to Christ present in the Eucharist and to His mystical body, the priestly functions show better than even ordination does, this special obligation to tend to perfection. When the priest celebrates the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he is like the figure of Him in whose name he speaks, the figure of Christ who offered Himself for us. The priest should be a minister conscious of the greatness of his functions, and he ought to strive for an ever closer union in heart and soul with the principal Priest who is at the same time the sacred Victim, *sacerdos et hostia.* To metunt the altar steps without the firm will to grow in charity would be hypocrisy, or at least an indirectly culpable negligence. Daily the minister of Christ ought to say with greater sanctity: *"Hoc est enim corpus meum. . . . Hic est calix sanguinis mei."* His Communion should be substantially more fervent each day by reason of a greater promptness of the will in the service of God, since the sacrament of the Eucharist ought not only to preserve but to increase charity in us.

Consequently St. Thomas says: "By holy orders a man is appointed to the most august ministry of serving Christ Himself in the sacrament of the altar. For this requires a greater inward holiness than that which is requisite for the religious state." [18] This is why, as we read in the same article, other things being equal, the priest who places an act contrary to holiness sins more grievously than a religious who is not a priest.

The sanctity becoming to the minister of God at the altar is thus described in *The Imitation of Christ:* "The priest, clad in sacred vestments, is Christ's vicegerent that he may suppliantly and humbly pray to God for himself and all the people. He has before and behind him the sign of the cross of our Lord, that he may ever remember the passion of Christ. . . . Behind him he is marked with the cross, that he may learn to suffer meekly for God's sake all the evil that men may do him. He wears the cross before him that he may bewail his own sins; and on his back, that through compassion he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed as mediator between God and the sinner. . . . When a priest celebrates, he honors God, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the departed, and makes himself partaker of all good things." [19]

[18] See IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 8.
[19] *The Imitation,* Bk. IV, chap. 5.

Likewise he should say the Divine Office with dignity, attention, and true piety. This great prayer of the Church is like the accompaniment of the Sacrifice of the Mass; it precedes it as a prelude, and it follows it. The Office is the canticle of the spouse of Christ from dawn until dark, and it is a great honor to take part in it. During its recitation the great intentions of the Church (for example, the pacification of the world through the extension of the kingdom of Christ) should be kept in mind.

Lastly, the priest has a special obligation to tend to perfection that he may accomplish his functions well in relation to the mystical body of Christ. For the sanctification of souls, he shares in the office which belongs first of all to the bishop, whose cooperator he should be. Thus the Council of Trent says: "Nothing leads the faithful more surely to true piety than the good example of the priest. The eyes of men rest on him as on a mirror of perfection to be imitated. So he ought to order his life, his manners, his exterior, his gestures, and his words in such a way that he may always preserve the gravity, moderation, and piety that he should have." [20] The priest who lives in the midst of the world is not obliged to make the vow of poverty, but he ought to be free from attachment to worldly things, willingly bestowing them upon the poor. He ought also to obey his bishop and to be the servant of the faithful in spite of difficulties and sometimes even of calumnies.

The need of this perfection appears especially for the work of preaching, of hearing confessions, and in the direction of souls. That preaching may be living and fruitful, the priest must speak from the abundance of his heart. St. Thomas even says that preaching should "proceed from the fullness of contemplation," [21] from the living, penetrating, delightful faith in the mystery of Christ, in the infinite value of the Mass, in the value of sanctifying grace and of eternal life. The priest should preach like a savior of souls, and he should work incessantly for the salvation not only of a few, but of many souls. He should not have received the priesthood in vain.

Likewise for the ministry of confession and direction, the priest must have a burning and luminous soul, a "hunger and thirst for the justice of God"; otherwise his ministry may become a danger to him; instead of saving souls, he himself may fall. If life does

[20] Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, chap. 1.
[21] *Stmnna,* Ila Hae, q. 188, a.6.

not ascend, it descends; and that it may not descend, it must rise like a flame. Especially in the spiritual life, he who does not advance, falls back. Finally, souls of whom the Lord is asking much, at times have recourse to the priest, and they should be able to find in him real help that they may walk truly in the way of sanctity. They should never have to go away without having, so to speak, received somethin".

We have been particularly impressed with what has been said on this subject by a friend of the Curé of Ars, the venerable Father Chevrier, a priest of Lyons, who accomplished immense good in that city.[22] He used to tell the priests whom he trained that they should always keep the crib, Calvary, and the tabernacle before their eyes. The crib, he would say, should remind them of poverty; a priest should be poor in his dwelling, his clothing, and his food. He should be humble of spirit and of heart in his relations with God and man. The greater his poverty in this regard, the more he glorifies God and is useful to his neighbor. The priest is a man who is despoiled.

Calvary should remind him of the necessity of immolation; he ought to die to his body, to his own mind, his will, his reputation, his family, and the world. He ought to immolate himself by silence, prayer, work, penance, suffering, and death. The more a priest dies to himself, the more life he possesses and gives to others. The true priest is a crucified man.

The tabernacle should remind him of the charity he ought to have. He ought to give his body, mind, time, goods, health, and life. He should give others life by his faith, doctrine, words, prayer, powers, and example. The priest should be like good bread; he is a man who is consumed.

This was the teaching of Father Chevrier, who opened a catechism class in Lyons for the most abandoned children. To gain admission it sufficed "to possess nothing, to know nothing, to be worth nothing." His supernatural life was such that he made true Christians and often great Christians of many of these children. With a minimum of material resources, he thus reaped a truly exceptional supernatural harvest.

Such is the ideal of the priesthood which every priest ought to keep before his eyes, at the same time recalling what St. Paul says:

22 Antoine Lcstra, *Le Père Chevrier,* 1935.

"But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls; although loving you more, I be loved less." [23] He would do well also to recall the words of Christ: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." [24]

The Ideal of Episcopal Perfection According to St. Isidore [28]

"It is necessary that he who will be raised up to teach and instruct the people in virtue, should be holy in all things, and in no way reprehensible. He who convinces another of sin, should himself be free from sin. First of all, he who seeks to admonish others to live well ought to correct himself; so that in all things he himself may furnish an example of living and incite all to good work by teaching and work. For him a knowledge of Scripture also is necessary; for if the life of a bishop is so holy, to him alone, thus living, it is profitable. Besides, if he shall be learned in doctrine and speech, he can also instruct others and teach his people, and repulse adversaries who, unless they can be refuted and convicted, may easily pervert the hearts of the simple.

"His speech should be pure, simple, open, full of gravity and honesty, sweetness and grace, treating of the mystery of the law, of the doctrine of faith, of the virtue of continency, of the discipline of justice; admonishing by various exhortations each and every one according to the profession and quality of established customs . . . whose special office it is to read Scripture, to peruse the canons, to imitate the examples of the saints, to practice vigils, fastings, and prayers; to have peace with his brethren, not to tear to pieces any of those committed to his care; to damn no one unless he be proved guilty, to excommunicate no one unless he has been tried. He ought to be outstanding alike in humility and authority, so that he may not cause the vices of his subjects to grow through excessive humility. Nor should he exercise the power of severity without moderation, but should be so much the more cautious toward those committed to his care, as he fears to be more severely examined by Christ.

[18] See II Cor. 12:15.
[M] John 13:15.
[80] *Ex libro II Officiorum ad S. Futuentium,* chap. 5.

"He will also have charity which is supereminent among all gifts, without which all virtue is nothing. Charity is, indeed, the guardian of chastity. Humility, moreover, is the place where it is kept. He will likewise have, among all these things, eminent chastity: thus, as his mind is given to Christ, he should be spotless and free from carnal impurity. Among these things, it behoves him to take care of the poor with careful distribution, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, receive pilgrims, redeem captives, protect widows and orphans, show prudent care in all things, provide with careful discretion. Hospitality should likewise be outstanding in him, that he may receive all with benignity and charity. If, indeed, all the faithful would like to hear those words of the Gospel: 'I was a stranger, and you took me in,' how much more, should the bishop, who ought to be the receiver of all diverse peoples?"

This page shows clearly what should be understood by the commonly accepted expression, that bishops are in the state of perfection *(in statu perfectionis exercendae)* to be exercised. Hence it is fitting, as has so often been said, that they should be in the unitive way.

The religious state is one in which man tends to perfection, *status perfectionis acquirendae.* To form a proper idea of it, one should read and meditate on the admirable pages in the Rule of St. Benedict on religious perfection and union with God, which ought daily to become more intimate in a life consecrated to the Lord. It would be profitable to study also what is said from the same comprehensive point of view about religious perfection by Blessed Humbert of the Romans, in his *Expositio Regulae B. Augustini et super Constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum.*[26] This work is a golden book for the formation of religious and for their preparation for the different offices to which obedience may assign them.

28 Ed. Berthier, Rome, 1889.

CHAPTER XV

The Three Ages of the Spiritual Life According to the Fathers and the Great Spiritual Writers

WE HAVE discussed what constitutes Christian perfection and the obligation to tend to it, either by the common way or by the special way of the effective practice of the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We must now consider the distinction between the three ages of the spiritual life, commonly called the age of beginners, that of proficients, and that of the perfect, or in other terms, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.

We shall see, first of all, how the problem of the three ages of the spiritual life is stated, and then the answer found in the testimony of the fathers and in that of the doctors who followed them.

Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest problems of spirituality is in what sense we must understand the traditional division of the "three ways, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive," according to the terminology used by Dionysius, or the states of "beginners, proficients, and the perfect," according to an earlier terminology preserved by St. Thomas.[1]

As we have already indicated in chapter one (sections 5, 6, and 7), two notably different interpretations of this traditional division have been given, according as the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God which results from it are considered as belonging to the normal way of sanctity, or as not only extrinsically but intrinsically extraordinary favors.

[1] *Summa,* Ha Ilae, q. 24, a. 9; q. 183, a.4.

This divergence of interpretation appears if one compares the division of ascetical-mystical theology generally followed until the second half of the eighteenth century with that given by several authors who have written since that period. We noted [2] that this divergence is evident if a comparison is made, for example, between the treatise of Vallgornera, O.P., *Mystica theologia divi Thomae (1662),* and the two works of Scaramelli, S.J., *Direttorio ascetico* (1751) and *Direttorio mistico.* Vallgornera, closely following the Carmelite, Philip of the Blessed Trinity, connects the latter's division with that of earlier authors and with certain characteristic texts from the works of St. John of the Cross on the period when the passive purifications of the senses and of the spirit generally appear.[3]

The following division made by Vallgornera shows what these authors considered the characteristics of the three ages of the spiritual life:

1) *The purgative way* or stage, proper to beginners, in which it is a question of the active purification of the external and internal senses, of the passions, of the intellect, and of the will, by mortification, meditation, prayer; and finally, it is a question of the passive purification of the senses, in which infused contemplation begins and by means of which the soul is raised to the illuminative way, as St. John of the Cross says.[4]

2) *The illuminative way* or state, proper to proficients, in which, after a preliminary chapter on the divisions of contemplation, are discussed the gifts of the Holy Ghost and infused contemplation, which proceeds principally from the gifts of understanding and wisdom, and which is declared desirable for all interior souls, as being morally necessary for the full perfection of Christian life. This second part of the work, after several articles relating to extraordinary graces (visions, revelations, interior words), ends with a chapter of nine articles relative to the passive purification of the spirit, which marks the passage to the unitive way. This again is what St. John of the Cross taught.[5]

[2] See *supra,* chap. 1, §§ 5, 6, 7.

[3] Philip of the Blessed Trinity sets forth the same ideas in the prologue of his *Summa theologiae mysticae* (ed. 1874, p. 17). Many Carmelite theologians think as he does.

[4] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps. 8, 14.

[5] *Ibid.,* Bk, II, chaps. 2, 11.

3) *The unitive life* or stage, proper to the perfect, in which it is a question of the intimate union of the contemplative soul with God and of its degrees up to the transforming union.

Like Philip of the Blessed Trinity and many others,[0] Vallgornera considers this division traditional, truly conformable to the doctrine of the fathers, to the principles of St. Thomas, and to the teaching of St. John of the Cross and the greatest mystics who have written on the three ages of the spiritual life. It harmonizes fully with these two capital texts from the writings of the Carmelite doctor: "The passive purification of the senses is common. It takes place in the greater number of beginners." [7] "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts." [8] From this point of view, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is manifestly in the normal way of sanctity. This is not at all surprising, since it proceeds from faith enlightened by the gifts of understanding and of wisdom, which are found in all the just.

However, the division given by Scaramelli and those who followed him is quite different. In his *Direttorio ascetico,* Scaramelli intends to describe the ordinary way which leads to Christian perfection. In this work he does not discuss, so to speak, the gifts of the Holy Ghost or the contemplation which proceeds from them. In his *Direttorio mistico,* he treats of infused contemplation as an extraordinary grace,[9] and only at the very end does he speak of the passive purification of the senses (tr. V); whereas, for St. John of the Cross, as we have said, this purification is like a second conversion which marks the entrance into the illuminative way.

The divergence between this new manner of looking at the matter and the preceding one springs manifestly from the fact that the early authors, as opposed to the more recent, maintained that all truly interior souls may humbly ask for and keenly desire the grace of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, of the Incarnation, of the passion of Christ, of the Sacrifice of the Mass,

[0] This is also the division proposed by another Dominican, Giovanni Maria di Lauro, in his *Theologia mystica,* published in Naples in 1743.

[7] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.

[8] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

[9] *Direttorio mistico,* tr. I, chap. 1, no. 10; tr. III, chap. 32.

of the Blessed Trinity present in us, and of eternal life, mysteries which are so many manifestations of the infinite goodness of God. They considered this supernatural and confused contemplation morally necessary for close union with God, in which the full perfection of Christian life consists. It is from this point of view that they determined the characteristics of each of the three ages of the spiritual life.

With the above statement in mind, the question may obviously be put in the following terms: Is the idea generally accepted until the second half of the eighteenth century true? Has it a basis in Scripture, in tradition, and in the very principles of theology? We shall examine these different points.

The Testimony of Scripture

We shall cite only some of the more important texts, after the already numerous ones which we adduced above. We have seen [10] in the light of the Gospel, according to the eight beatitudes, how lofty Christian perfection is. We have also seen that it cannot be obtained without the mortification of all that is inordinate in us,[11] without the cross borne with patience,[12] without prayer to the Father hidden in the secret of our hearts,[13] without docility to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost,[14]*which should characterize "the true adorers . . . in spirit and in truth." [18] Is this not, under a special influence of the Holy Ghost, the loving contemplation of the mysteries of salvation?

St. Paul tells us also what is normally proper to the spiritual age of the perfect when he writes: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: . . . the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory. . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit; for the

[10] See *supra,* chap. 9.
[11] Matt. 5:29 ff.
[12] *Ibid.,* 10:38.
[13] *Ibid.,* 6:6.
[14] John 3:8; 14:16, 26.
[18] John 4:23.

Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." [16] Is this not what the perfect contemplate?

St. Paul writes likewise to the Ephesians: "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man; that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpassed all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God." [17] Is not this what characterizes the age of the perfect: the infused contemplation of the mystery of Christ and the union with God which results from it? We shall see that the Greek and Latin fathers thus understood these inspired words, which they never tired of repeating.

First of all, let us note, as several writers have observed, that in the spiritual life of the apostles themselves, who were trained directly by Christ, there are three distinct phases which correspond to the three ages of the spiritual life.[18]

The first phase of their interior life, that of beginners, extends from their conversion up to the Passion, when they passed through a profound crisis, during which Peter went so far as to deny his Master. Immediately afterwards he repented. This was his second conversion, which took place in that true passive purification, the dark night of the Passion. Something similar occurred in the life of the other apostles when, by the grace of the Savior, they again got control of themselves after having abandoned Him.

The second phase of their interior life, that of proficients, extends from the Passion to Pentecost. They were still fearful; their faith still needed to be enlightened, their hope to be strengthened, their charity to be endowed with the necessary zeal. This phase was completed by the great privation of the sensible presence of Christ after His ascension into heaven. They had to continue their way in naked

[16] See I Cor. 2:6-10.

[17] Eph. 3:14-19.

[18] We developed these observations in *Les trois conversions et les trois voies,* pp. 1-112.

faith, with the prospect of the persecutions which had been announced to them.

The third phase began with Pentecost, which was for them like a third conversion, a true passive purification of the spirit and a spiritual transformation which introduced them into the perfect life. This purification greatly enlightened their souls, and greatly strengthened their wills to preach everywhere Christ crucified. This third phase of their interior life was marked by an increasingly closer union with God and deeper self-oblation, even to martyrdom.

Farther on, we shall return to the subject of these three phases of the interior life of the apostles, each phase of which began by a conversion or a transformation of the soul. If a person reflects deeply on this subject before God in prayer, he will find in it a true light on the three ages of the spiritual life. These indications given by Scripture are, moreover, confirmed by what the fathers tell us.

The Testimony of Tradition

In recent years special study has been made of the doctrine of the Greek and Latin fathers on these three periods in the interior life of every Christian striving for sanctity. We shall recall here what seems most certain in their teaching.[19] We shall consider, first of all, the testimony of the Greek fathers. Among the apostolic fathers, St. Ignatius of Antioch often speaks in his letters of the spiritual and mystical presence of Christ in the Church and in the faithful. He exhorts the faithful by telling them that they are *Christophores* (Christ-bearers) or *Theopbores* (God-bearers). He says to them: "Let us perform all our actions with the thought that God dwells in us. We shall thus be His temples, and He Himself will be our God, dwelling in us (cf. Eph. 15:3)." St. Ignatius of Antioch strongly aspires to live more and more intimately with Christ and to die in order to be definitively united with Him. His letters are filled with that lofty knowledge of Christ, at once living and penetrating, which is nothing else but contemplation and

[10] Cf. in particular F. Cayré, A.A., *Précis de patrologie,* 1927, in which the spiritual doctrine of the fathers of the Church is set forth *ex professo,* which is quite rare in a work of this type. Cf. I, 19-29, 173 f., 177, 192, 207, 417, 582, 584, 683; II, 335-62, 903-6. See also G. Bardy, *La vie spirituelle d'après les pères des trois premiers siècles.* 1935.

which overflows in a most abundant apostolic activity, the fruit of a great charity. But to reach this very close union with God and the Savior, we must have contempt for self, for all that is inordinate in us, for everything that lessens the divine life in us.[20] In this period of persecution, St. Ignatius desires to be ground by the teeth of beasts in order to become the wheat of Christ, as Christ was ground to become our Eucharistic bread.

In the second century, St. Irenaeus insists on the fact that man ought to allow himself to be formed by God like clay in the potter's hands. Instead of resisting, of shrinking away from the imprint of the divine hand, he should be increasingly docile to the Holy Ghost in prayer and action, and then he will come to judge spiritually of all things and to live only on the love of God.[21]

At the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria (in his *Stromata)* [22] describes the spiritual ascent, every phase of which brings the soul closer to the state of the perfect man that St. Paul speaks of to the Ephesians.[23] Clement conceives of these successive states through which interior souls pass as spiritual mansions.[24] These states he characterizes as follows: first of all, the fear of God dominates,[25] then faith and hope,[26] and finally, charity and wisdom.[27] Now, the fear of God is the least elevated of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom is the highest of all, according to the descending enumeration given by Isaias (11:2 f.). The gift of wisdom bestows peace, which springs also from charity, the highest of the virtues.

According to Clement of Alexandria, the perfect are tranquilized souls in which charity dominates. According to the expression of St. Paul, they have attained to the state of the "perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).[28] They have received the mysterious and hidden wisdom which St. Paul preached "among the perfect" (I Cor. 2:6). Clement calls this wisdom the *gnosis.* It is a religious contemplation springing from

[20] Cf. *Epistle to the Romans,* 2,4, 5,6,9. *Epistle to the Trallians,* 4 f.
[21] *Adv. haeres.,* IV, 39; V, 9; IV, 33.
[22] *Stromata,* VII, 2; *PG,* IX, 413.
[23] Eph. 4:13.
[24] Cf. PG, IX, 416.
[25] *Stromata,* II, 7 f.; PG, VIII, 968-76.
[26] *Ibid.,* II, 6; PG, VIII, 960-90.
[27] *Ibid,* IV, 5 (PG, VIII, 1233); VI (PG, IX, 292, 325, 328).
[28] *Ibid.,* VI, 12 (PG, IX, 323); VU, 11 (PG, IX, 496).

the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the docile soul and transforming our interior life, making us friends of God.

Origen, like his master Clement of Alexandria, says that the perfect man lives especially by charity, and that ordinarily he receives from the Holy Ghost infused wisdom, intimate knowledge of the divinity of Christ[29] and of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.[30] Origen, in his commentary on St. John i:6, even writes: "No one can grasp the meaning of the Gospel (of St. John, which is consecrated to the divinity of Christ) unless he has rested on the breast of Jesus, and unless he has received from Him, Mary, who becomes his mother also."[31] According to Origen, the Word reveals Himself to the perfect and trains their souls, as He trained those of the apostles. In the most beautiful pages of his *Commentary on St. Matthew* 12:15-20, Origen admirably describes this training of the Twelve by the Savior.[32]

Origen distinguishes three stages:[33] that of beginners, in whom inordinate passions lose their strength; that of proficients, in whom these passions begin to die out under the abundance of the grace of the Holy Ghost; finally, that of the perfect. He recommends docility to the Holy Ghost, through whom we can go to Christ, and through Him rise even to the Father in the contemplation which solitude favors.

Didymus the Blind and the Cappadocian fathers teach the same doctrine. Didymus, whose teaching is marked by the depth of his piety, invites every Christian to close union with Christ, whom he calls the Spouse of holy souls, an expression taken from the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.[34]

St. Basil, who organized monastic life in Cappadocia and Pontus, set forth the principles of this life and their application in his *Greater Rules* and his *Lesser Rules*.[35] His spirituality is firm, solid, and serious, and prepares souls for contemplation and union with God. In the preface of his book on the monastic rules, he says:

[20] *Contra Cels.,* I, 13; VI, 13; *PG,* XI, 679, 1309; *In Levi/.,* 5:3; PG, XII, 452; *In Psalm.,* 26:4; *PG,* XII, 1279.
[80] *In Joann.,* 1:9; 2:3; PG, XIV, 36!., 113.
[81] *Ibid.,* 1:6; PG, XIV, 32; *Comm, in Cant. Cant.,* prolog.; PG, XIII, 64-75.
[82] PG, XIII, 1016-29.
[83] *In Rom.,* homil. VI, 14; PG, XIV, 1102.
[8‘] Cf. Bardy, *Didyme l'Aveugle,* 1910, pp. 157-60.
[88] *PG,* XXXI, 889-1051, 1052-1306.

"When the eye of the soul becomes pure and shadowless, it contemplates divine things, thanks to a light from on high, which fills it abundantly without satiating it. . . . After undergoing painful combats and succeeding in freeing the spirit, in spite of its close union with matter, from the mélange of sensible passions, it becomes capable of conversing with God. . . . He who has reached this state ought no longer to permit the vapors of vile passions to trouble and to cover the gaze of his soul with a thick veil, and thus to make him lose spiritual and divine contemplation." St. Basil expresses the same idea in his explanation of Psalms 32 and 44, and in his first homily on faith. Progressive purification is the condition of union with God in contemplation.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus likewise says that God is substantial light,[36] which a person can grasp only by himself becoming light,[37] and by purifying his soul in order to rise from fear to wisdom,[38] that is, from the lowest of the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the highest. It will be observed that all these authors use three terms: purification, illumination, union.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *De vita Moysis,*[39] in which the life of Moses serves only as the outward framework for the development of the spiritual life, shows that we must detach ourselves from creatures and live by Christ in order to be "admitted to the contemplation of the divine nature" and to union with God. This, says the saint, constitutes a victory over the enemy, a victory obtained only by the cross and by the progressive purification of one's intellect from all that is sensible and material. In his treatise *De virginitate,*[40] the same father shows that perfection makes the soul the spouse of Christ, a theme which he also develops in his homilies on the *Canticle of Canticles.*[41]

St. Ephrem, who considered Christian life a spiritual combat, regards contemplation obtained by docility to the Holy Ghost as the privilege of the perfect life. In his treatise *De virtute,* chapter 10, he says: "When we have conquered our passions, destroyed

[36] *Oratio 31,* chap. 3.
[37] *Oratio 40,* chaps. 37 f.: "Lumen efficiamur. Illuminemur oculis, ut recte cernamus."
[38] *Oratio 39,* chap. 8.
[39] *PG,* XLIV, 297-430.
[40] *PG,* XLVI, 317-4,6.
[41] *PG,* XLIV, 297-430.

every inordinate natural affection in ourselves, and emptied our minds of every preoccupation useless to salvation, then the Holy Ghost, finding our souls at rest, and communicating a new power to our intellects, will put light into our hearts, as we light a lamp that has already been provided with wick and oil. . . . Therefore, above all things, let us prepare our souls for the reception of the divine light, and so render ourselves worthy of the gifts of God." The way of union with God is through purification and the light which the Holy Ghost gives.

In the fifth century, Diadochus taught this doctrine in his *Chapters on Spiritual Perfection,*[42] and Dionysius the Mystic (the Pseudo-Areopagite) repeatedly speaks in well-known texts of purification, illumination, and the unitive or perfect way.[43] The unitive way belongs to the mystical order; it is the normal prelude of eternal life. According to Dionysius, purification prepares a lofty knowledge of God, illumination communicates it, and sanctification makes it expand completely in the soul.

Among the Greek fathers of the seventh century, St. Maximus develops this doctrine and distinguishes three degrees of prayer corresponding to the three degrees of charity: "Simple prayer is like bread; it comforts beginners. When a little contemplation is added to prayer, it is like oil with which one refreshes oneself; pure contemplation is like a wine of exquisite flavor which lifts those who drink it out of themselves." [44] "Contemplation proceeds from an illumination of the Holy Ghost." [45] "He who is purified is enlightened and merits to penetrate into the innermost sanctuary and there enjoy the embraces of the Word." [46] St. Maximus also noted clearly the severe trials which contemplatives must undergo, the crucible through which they must pass that they may be fully purified and firmly established in the love of God.[47]

42 Published by Weis-Liebersdorf, Leipzig, Teubner, 1912. Quoted at length by Saudreau, *Vie d'union d'après les grands maîtres,* 3rd ed., 1921, pp. 52 ff.

43 Cf. *The Celestial Hierarchy,* III, 2 f. *The Divine Names,* I, 2; IV, 12 f.; VII, 13. *Mystical Theology,* I, 3; II. See also Cayré, *Précis de patrologie,* II, 92-96.

44 PG, XC, 1441. Cf. Cayré, *op. cit.,* II, 308 ff.

45 PG, XC, 1209.

46 *Ibid.,* col. 1089.

47 *Ibid.,* col. 1215. We have assembled elsewhere numerous similar texts

In the eighth century, St. John Damascene says also that infused contemplation is generally granted to the perfect: "He who has reached the highest degree of love, going out of himself, so to speak, discovers Him who cannot be seen. Taking his flight above this cloud of the senses which arrests the gaze of the spirit and establishing himself in peace, he fixes his gaze on the Sun of justice and enjoys this spectacle which he can never tire of." [48] "To have attained to the contemplation of the Creator by the generous practice of virtues is a treasure that will not be snatched away." [49]

Therefore, according to the Greek fathers, supernatural contemplation, proceeding from the gift of wisdom, is in the normal way of sanctity. It begins with the age of proficients and ordinarily accompanies the charity of the perfect.

The Latin fathers, in particular St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, present the same teaching. In *De quantitate animae* (chap. 33, nos. 70-76), St. Augustine distinguishes several degrees. He insists on the struggle against sin, the difficult work of purification, followed by the entrance into light for those who are purified and finally by divine union *(mansio in luce}.* Later, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount,[50] he describes the ascending progress of the soul toward God, according to the gradation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The fear of God is the first degree of the spiritual life; wisdom its summit. Between these two extremes, he distinguishes a double period of purifying preparation for wisdom: a remote preparation, called the active life, which is the active practice of the moral virtues that correspond to the gifts of piety, fortitude, knowledge, and counsel; then a proximate preparation, called the contemplative life,[51] which is the eminent exercise of the theological virtues and of the gifts of understanding and wisdom in souls established in peace and docile to grace. Faith, enlightened by these gifts, is then the principle of contemplation, and ardent charity unites the soul closely to God. Thus the labors of the active life

from St. Maximus and his predecessors: cf. *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, 668 ff.

[48] *De Transfigur. Dom.,* 10.

[49] *De virtutibus et vitiis; PG,* XCV, 85-98.

[50] *De Sermone Domini,* 1, chaps. 1–4; *De doctrina Christiana,* II, chap. 7; *Serm.* 347.

[51] *De Trinitate,* Bks. XII-X1V.

prepare for contemplation, in which the purified soul enjoys the divine light, the pledge of eternal life. This contemplation which proceeds from the gift of wisdom is, in truth, infused contemplation.[52]

In the fifth century, Cassian in his *Conferences,* or lessons in spirituality, especially in the ninth and tenth, shows that the end of the spiritual life on earth is divine contemplation, which Cassian regards as the perfect exercise of the love of God. The soul prepares for it by prayer in order to obtain the pardon of sins committed, by the practice of the virtues and a lively desire for a greater charity for itself and its neighbor.[53] Then prayer ends by becoming "a prayer all of fire," [54] which "is formed by the contemplation of God alone and by the ardor of a burning charity." [55] "Thus the soul begins to taste in an earthen vessel the first fruits of the glory which it hopes for in heaven." [56]

It is well known that Cassian's *Conferences* were over a long period the current book of spiritual reading. St. Thomas read them often, and preserved Cassian's doctrine in speaking of the gift of wisdom, whose progress accompanies that of charity.

In the sixth century, St. Gregory the Great also admits the division of the three degrees of the spiritual life: the struggle against sin,[57] then the active life or the practice of the virtues,[58] and the contemplative life, which is that of the perfect,[59] and which he declares necessary for apostles or preachers of the word of God [80] and for those who wish to attain perfection.[01] In this teaching, St. Gregory shows himself the disciple of St. Augustine. In his opinion all the

[52] Father Cayré says quite justly in his *Précis de patrologie,* 1927 (I, 669), in treating of the spirituality of St. Augustine: "St. Thomas will truly remain the disciple of St. Augustine when he presents these graces (of infused contemplation) as the crowning of the entire spiritual organism of the soul, and as destined to subject the soul wholly to God" (la Ilae, q.68, a. 1).

Father Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M., says the same thing about St. Bonaventure in *Archiviimi Franciscanum historicum,* 1921, fasc. I, II, "La théologie mystique de saint Bonaventure."

[53] See *Ninth Conference,* chaps. 8 ff.

[51] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

[85] *Ibid.,* chap. 18.

[60] *Tenth Conference,* chap. 6.

[82] *Morales,* XXXI, 87.

[89] *Ibid.,* II, 76 ff.

[89] *Ibid.,* II, 77; VI, 57; XXV, 15; *In Ezech.,* Bk. II, VII, 7.

[«°] *Morales,* XXX, 8.

[81] *Ibid.,* VI, 58 f.

works of the Christian life have their full perfection only if souls are illumined by the superior lights of contemplation.[62] It is the end of asceticism, the fruit of a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the exercise of the gift of wisdom.[63] Clearly meant is an infused contemplation,[64] for which one prepares especially by humility, purity of heart, and habitual recollection.

St. Gregory also noted the painful passive purifications later described by Hugh of St. Victor, Tauler, and especially St. John of the Cross.[65] St. Gregory insists on the fact that these purifications "dry up all sensual affection in us" [66] and thus prepare us for contemplation and union with God, wherein we find great strength in trial and ardent charity.

St. Bernard preserves all this teaching, and speaks in his *Sermons* [67] of the humble and burning desire for contemplation. If these desires are ardent, they are, in his opinion, heard and granted; but men of desire are only too rare. St. Bernard often describes the union with God which results from infused contemplation and the alternate succession of the presence and absence of the Word, the Spouse of the soul.[68]

The same doctrine is also found in Hugh of St. Victor, who insists on the passive purifications of the soul,[69] in Richard of St. Victor,[70] in St. Bonaventure,[71] who was fond of the terminology, which Dionysius used habitually, of the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.

St. Thomas, as we shall see, preserves the distinction between beginners, proficients, and the perfect.[72] This distinction is clarified

[82] *In Ezech.,* Bk. II, II, 11.

[83] *Morales,* V, yo f.; XXII, 50 f.

[84] *Ibid.,* X, 13: "We are inclined toward superior goods when the Spirit touches us with His breath . . . and then is imprinted in the heart which receives it the traces, as it were, of God's footsteps." Cf. Cayré, *op. tit.,* II, 242-47.

[85] *Morales,* X, 10, no. 17; XXIV, 6, no. 11.

[88] *In Ezech.,* Bk. II, horn. II, nos. 2 f.

[82] *Sermons,* IX, 1-3; XXXII, 2; XL1X, 3.

[88] *Ibid.,* VIII, 6; XXII, 2; XXIII, 16.

[80] *Hom. I in Eccl.*

[70] *Benjamin Major,* chaps. 1-4, 6.

[71] *Itinerarium,* VIII; *De triplici via,* chap. 3; *De apologia pauperum,* chap. 3; *Sermo 1 de Dorn. V post Baseha.* Cf. P. Bonncfoi, O.F.M., *Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons selon saint Bonaventure,* 1929, p. 217; E. Longpré, O.F.M., *art. cit.*

[72] Sec lia llae, 4.24, a.9.

by what he says in his *Commentary on St. Matthew* (chap. 5) about the beatitudes of the flight from sin, of those of the active life, and of those of the contemplative life. In this commentary he describes the ascent of the soul as St. Augustine and St. Gregory did.'[3]

The Three Ages of the Spiritual Life and Those of the Corporeal Life

St. Thomas[74] compares the three ages of the spiritual life with those of the corporeal life: childhood, adolescence, and maturity. We should note this analogy, and in particular the transition from one period to another.

It is generally admitted that first childhood ceases on the awakening of reason about the seventh year. This period is followed by a sort of second childhood which lasts until the period of adolescence, about the fourteenth year. Adolescence extends from the fourteenth to the twentieth year; then comes maturity, which is divided into the period which precedes full maturity, and that which, from about the thirty-fifth year onward, follows before the decline of old age.

Psychologists point out that mentality changes with the transformations of the organism. The child follows chiefly the imagination and the impulses of the sensible appetites. He does not yet discern, nor does he organize rationally; even when his reason begins to awaken, it remains extremely dependent on his senses. On leaving childhood, about the fourteenth year, at the period of puberty, there is not only an organic, but a psychological, intellectual, and moral transformation. The adolescent is no longer content to follow his imagination; he begins to reflect on the affairs of human life, on the necessity of preparing himself for a certain profession or life-work. This period of transition, called the awkward age, is not without difficulty: then, about the fourteenth year, the adolescent's moral personality begins to take shape with a sense of honor and of good reputation, or he may become perverted and begin to go wrong, unless he becomes a retarded, unstable, abnormal person.

Here the analogy throws light on the spiritual life. We shall see that the beginner who does not become a proficient, as he should, turns out badly or remains a retarded, tepid soul, and, as it were,

'' Cf. *rtipra,* chap. 10.

74 Sec Ila Hac, <]. 24, a.9.

a spiritual dwarf. As the fathers, particularly St. Bernard,[75] so often say: "He who does not advance, falls back." To refuse to become better, is to fall back, whereas to tend persistently toward perfection, is, in a sense, already to possess it.[76]

To continue the analogy, if the crisis of puberty, which is at once both physical and moral, is a difficult period through which to pass, the same is true of another crisis, which may be called that of first liberty, which introduces the adolescent into maturity at about the twentieth year. The young man, who is then fully formed physically, must begin to take his place in the life of society. Some pass through this period badly, abuse the liberty given them, and, like the prodigal son, confound liberty with license. On the other hand, the adult who develops normally and takes the good road concerns himself with matters of individual, family, and social life in a manner superior to that of the adolescent. The adult is engrossed in more general questions. Unless he has received a higher vocation from God, he himself founds a home that he may in his turn become an educator.

Something similar exists in the spiritual life. When the proficient who is, so to speak, in the period of spiritual adolescence, reaches the more advanced age of the perfect, his mentality rises as it becomes spiritual, and it grows more and more supernatural. He sees with increasing clearness not only the things that pertain to individual, family, and social life, but those that have to do with the reign of God or the life of the Church in their relation to eternal life.

We should like particularly to emphasize here the differences which separate the three ages of the spiritual life and to explain how the transition is made from one to the other. As St. Thomas observes: "The divers degrees of charity are distinguished according to the different pursuits *{studia)* to which man is brought by the increase of charity. For at first it is incumbent on man to occupy himself chiefly with avoiding sin and resisting his concupiscences, which move him in opposition to charity. This concerns beginners, in whom charity has to be fed or fostered lest it be destroyed. In the second place, man's chief pursuit is to aim at progress in good, and this is the pursuit of the proficient, whose principal aim is to

[75] *Epist.,* 34, 1; 91, 3; 254,4: "Not to advance, is to fall back."
[76] *Ibid.*

strengthen their charity by adding to it: man's third pursuit is to aim chiefly at union with God and enjoyment of Him: this belongs to the perfect who 'desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ' (Phil. 1:23)" [77]

These are the three stages of progress toward sanctity; but what is important to add, and has been admirably observed by St. John of the Cross, is the transition from one spiritual age to another, a transition analogous to that in the order of corporeal life. As there is the crisis of puberty between childhood and adolescence, there is a similar crisis between the purgative life of beginners and the illuminative life of proficients. This crisis has been described by several great spiritual writers, notably by Tauler,[78] especially by St. John of the Cross, under the title of the "passive purification of the senses," [79] by Father Lallemant, S.J., under the name of "second conversion." [80] As a matter of fact, this crisis recalls the second conversion of Peter during the dark night of the Passion.

At this point, the generous beginner, who runs the risk of standing still in many unconscious defects, in particular of dwelling on sensible consolations in his spiritual exercises, is deprived of these consolations that he may be introduced into a spiritual way that is much more detached from the senses, a way in which he finds in aridity a beginning of contemplation which the Holy Ghost grants him in order to make him advance. This is St. John's teaching: "The first night, or sensual purgation, wherein the soul is purified or detached, will be of the senses, subjecting them to the spirit. . . . The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners." [81] They begin to understand clearly that one must be truly poor in spirit, truly humble, in order to grow in charity. One must renounce all the more or less gross or subtle follies of vanity, pride, and spiritual sensuality. The holy doctor adds: "When the house of sensuality was at rest, that is, when the passions were morti-

77 See IIa IIae, q. 24, a.9.

78 *Second Sermon for Lent,* and *Sermon for the Monday before Palm Sunday* (nos. 3 f.), which, in the Latin translation of Surius, is attributed to the first Sunday after the octave of the Epiphany.

78 *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps, çf.: "Characteristic signs of the night of the senses." "How they are to conduct themselves who have entered the dark night."

30 *La doctrine spirituelle* (Paris, ed. Gabalda, 1908), 2nd principle, chap. 6, a.2, sec. 2, p. 1:3; cf. pp. 91, 123, 143, 187,301 If.

81 *The Dark Night,* Bk. 1, chap. 8.

fied, concupiscence quenched, the desires subdued and lulled to sleep in the blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of *proficients,* which is also called the *illuminative way,* or the way of *infused contemplation,* wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make (at least quite generally in prayer). . . . Such . . . is this night and purgation of the senses." [82]

The words we have italicized in this text are very significant and reproduce exactly the original Spanish. Following the example of St. Augustine, Cajetan, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, Tauler, and others, St. John of the Cross, it should be noted, speaks of the illuminative way in the full, strong meaning of the term, and not of an illuminative way that is, so to speak, diminished, such as exists in those who have only partially profited by the passive purification of the senses, as the saint points out.[83]

Finally, farther on when speaking of proficients,[84] St. John of the Cross treats of the imperfections proper to the advanced or proficients. He declares that there is still in them natural rudeness, a distraction and dissipation of mind, presumption, and subtle and secret pride. These defects show the necessity of the passive purification of the spirit in order to enter the perfect unitive way, that of those who, as St. Thomas says: "aim chiefly at union with God and enjoyment of Him . . . and who 'desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' " [85]

This trial of the passive purification of the spirit is a crisis analogous to that which occurs in the natural order when the adolescent becomes an adult and makes use of his liberty, sometimes to his cost. At this point in the spiritual order, there is, as it were, a third conversion,[80] or better a transformation of soul which recalls what Pentecost was for the apostles, when, after being deprived of the presence of Christ, who had ascended into heaven, they were en-

[82] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.
[83] *Ibid.,* chap. 9.
[81] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 2.
[85] See IIa IIae, q.24, a.9.
[83] Tauler spoke also of this great purification in the *Sermon for the Monday before Palm Sunday:* no. 7: Trials by which the life of the third degree begins; no. 8: Reason for these trials; no. 9: Divine union in the superior faculties.

lightened and fortified by the Holy Ghost, who thus prepared them for the severe persecutions they would have to undergo and who made them perfect ministers of the Savior.[87]

St. John of the Cross is assuredly describing spiritual progress as it appears especially among contemplatives, and more particularly in those who are the most generous in striving to reach union with God as directly as possible. He thus shows the superior laws of the life of grace in all their loftiness. But these laws apply also in an attenuated manner in many others who do not reach such a lofty perfection, but who, nevertheless, advance generously without turning back. Attentive reading of the history of the interior life of the servants of God, reveals, in their interior sufferings and their progress, this profound purification of the senses and spirit, so that all their faculties may at length be fully subjected to God present in them in the depths of their souls.

St. John of the Cross, better than anyone else, noted these two crises of the transition from one age to another, and he rightly called them the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit. Manifestly they correspond well to the nature of the human soul (to its two parts, the sensible and the spiritual). They correspond also to the nature of the divine seed, to sanctifying grace, the germ of eternal life, which ought more and more to vivify our lower and higher faculties and to inspire all our acts until the depths of our souls are purified of all egoism, of all more or less conscious self-love, and in truth belong entirely to God.[88]

87 We developed these ideas at length in a little treatise. *Les trois conversions et les trois voies,* pp. 42-50, 123-80.

88 The objection has sometimes been raised that this lofty idea of St. John of the Cross notably surpasses the common idea of spiritual writers, and, it has been added, it seems that the beginners who are discussed in *The Dark Night* (Bk. I, chap. 8) are not those generally spoken of but those who are making a beginning, not in the spiritual life but in the mystical ways. To this objection it is easy to reply that the idea of St. John of the Cross corresponds admirably to the nature of the soul (sensitive and spiritual), no less than to that of grace, and that the beginners he speaks of are indeed those to whom this name is generally given. To be convinced of this, it suffices to see the defects that St. John finds in them: spiritual gluttony, an inclination to sensuality, to anger, to envy, to spiritual laziness, to pride, which leads them to "go to a stranger to confess their sin, that their usual confessor may think they are not sinners but good people" *(The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 2). Such people are real beginners who nave made no progress in asceticism.

When he speaks of the three ways, the purgative, the illuminative, and the

Keeping this fact in mind, we can understand that Vallgornera should have followed this lofty idea of the three ages of the spiritual life in dividing his work *Theologia mystica divi Thomae.* In doing so he concurred, as we said in the beginning of this chapter, with the Carmelites, Philip of the Blessed Trinity, Anthony of the Holy Ghost, and many others. Thus is preserved the tradition of the fathers, of Clement of Alexandria, Cajetan, St. Augustine, Dionysius, St. Bernard, St. Anselm, Hugh, Richard of St. Victor, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas, whose doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Ghost thus appears in its full development.

To sum up what we have just said, we shall give a table that coincides approximately with one agreed on by several of the authors we have just named.[88]

In beginners may be noted, with the first degree of charity, the initial virtues or the first degree of meekness, patience, chastity, and humility. Interior and exterior mortification makes them more and more avoid deliberate venial sins, or induces them to rise immediately from mortal sin should they fall into it. Their prayer is vocal, their meditation is discursive and tends to be transformed into simplified affective prayer. In them the gifts of the Holy Ghost begin to appear, but they are still rather latent. From time to time they have special inspirations from the Holy Ghost, but as yet little aptitude to profit by them. Docility to the Holy Ghost remains feeble; the soul is, above all, conscious of its activity and must frequently recognize its indigence.[80]

unitive, St. John understands them, not in a diminished sense but in their normal plenitude.

It should be noted also that, following several other writers, Father Cayré *(Précis de patrologie, histoire et doctrine des pères et docteurs de PEglise,* II, 886 ff.) rightly says: "There is certainly no reason to distinguish in the spirituality of St. John of the Cross two parallel ways, the one ascetical and the other mystical, each leading by its own means to perfection. The active and the passive ways, spoken of in the two great treatises *(The Ascent* and *The Dark Night),* represent not two distinct states, but two aspects of the one and only way of sanctity. . . . St. John of the Cross considers the transforming union the normal end of the journey toward perfection." With this in view, he points out in *The Ascent* what the soul must do, and in *The Dark Night* what it must receive with docility. Several Carmelite theologians have recently made the same observation.

[88] In particular, with the table proposed by Father Cayré, *op. cit.,* II, 811, 834.

[80] This stage corresponds to the first and second mansions of St. Teresa.

The soul experiences its poverty in the crisis of sensible aridity of the passive purification of the senses, a painful purification more or less well borne, which marks the transition to the illuminative way, which has not been diminished and is truly worthy of its name.[01]

In proficients, with the second degree of charity, appear the solid virtues which are no longer merely initial virtues; in particular, meekness and patience, a more genuine humility, which leads to benevolence toward one's neighbor, and the spirit of the three counsels of poverty, chastity, and filial obedience to God recognized as present in the superiors placed over us. With these solid virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost begin to manifest themselves, especially the three less elevated gifts of fear, knowledge, and piety. The soul, more docile now, profits more from interior inspirations and illuminations. If the proficient is truly generous, then infused prayer ordinarily begins by isolated acts of infused contemplation in the course of the acquired prayer of recollection. Then, if the soul is faithful, little by little come the prayers of supernatural recollection and of quiet (arid or consoled), in which may be seen a manifest influence of the gift of piety, which makes us cry: "Abba, Father," as St. Paul says.[02] Here, truly, the soul's intimate conversation with itself becomes a conversation with God. Then, if the soul is generous, it sees in itself faults of subtle pride, of lack of benevolence toward its neighbor, sometimes of hardness, of lack of zeal for the salvation of so many souls that are being lost. These defects which did not at first appear to the soul, require a new passive purification, that of the spirit.[03]

In spite of certain, as it were involuntary, imperfections, the perfect have, with the third degree of charity, eminent and even heroic virtues: great meekness, almost unalterable patience, profound humility which does not fear scorn and loves even humiliations, a great spirit of faith which leads the soul to see all things as coming from the hand of God, great confidence in God, magnanimity which causes the soul to tend to great things in spite of obstacles and rebuffs, and perfect abandonment to the will of God. The gifts of understanding and wisdom then manifest themselves more strikingly[81]

81 As we shall see, it is the third mansion of St. Teresa with a beginning of the arid prayer of quiet.

02 This stage corresponds to rhe fourth mansion of St. Teresa, and in part to the fifth. In this fifth mansion, we shall see farther on, there arc extraordinary graces that do not belong to the normal way of sanctity.

·· St. Teresa speaks of this purification in the sixth mansion.

Degrees of charity	Beginners (purgative way) Ascetical life	Proficients (illuminative way) Threshold of the mystical life	The Perfect (unitive way) Mystical life
Virtues	*Initial virtues,* first degree of charity, temperance, chastity, patience, first degrees of humility.	*Solid virtues,* second degree of charity, obedience, more profound humility; spirit of the counsels.	*Eminent and heroic virtues,* third degree of charity, perfect humility, great spirit of faith, abandonment, almost unalterable patience.
Gifts	*Gifts of the Holy Ghost rather latent,* inspirations at rare intervals, slight aptitude as yet to profit by them. The soul is especially conscious of its activity.	*The gifts of the Holy Ghost begin to manifest themselves,* especially the three inferior gifts of fear, knowledge, and piety. The soul, more docile now, profits more from inspirations and interior illuminations.	*The higher gifts manifest themselves more notably and frequently.* The soul is, as it were, dominated by the Holy Ghost. Great passivity in His regard, which does not exclude the activity of the virtues.
Purifications	*Active purification of the senses* and of the spirit, or exterior and interior mortification.	*Passive purification of the senses,* under the influence especially of the gifts of fear and knowledge. Concomitant trials. Entrance into the illuminative way.	*Purification of the spirit* under the influence especially of the gift of understanding. Concomitant trials in which are manifested the gifts of fortitude and of counsel. Entrance into the perfect unitive way.
Prayers	*Acquired prayer:* vocal prayer, discursive prayer, affective prayer, which becomes more and more simple, called the prayer of active recollection.	*Initial infused prayer,* isolated acts of infused contemplation in the course of the acquired prayer of recollection; then, prayers of supernatural recollection and of arid or consoled quiet. The gift of piety.	*Infused prayers* of simple union, of complete union (sometimes ecstatic), of transforming union, under the more and more marked influence of the gift of wisdom. Concomitant favors.
Mansions of St. Teresa	First and second mansions	Third and fourth mansions	Fifth, sixth, and seventh mansions

and frequently. The soul is, as it were, dominated by the Holy Ghost, who inspires it also to a more perfect practice of the virtues.

Ordinarily at this time, there is the infused prayer of union under the more and more marked influence of the gift of wisdom.[94] The center of the soul is finally purified, and the higher and lower faculties are fully subject to God intimately present in the inner sanctuary. In the penumbra of faith, this is eternal life begun, or the normal prelude of beatitude which ought never to end.

This spiritual progress may be expressed by the preceding summary, which should be read from the bottom up in order better to see that the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit are found at the entrance to the illuminative and unitive ways.

[84] St. Teresa speaks of the various degrees of the infused prayer of union in the fifth, sixth, and seventh mansions.

CHAPTER XVI

Spiritual Reading of Scripture, of the Works and Lives of the Saints

AFTER discussing the sources of the interior life and the end to be attained, which is Christian perfection, we should consider the exterior helps found in the reading of spiritual works and in spiritual direction.

Among the great means of sanctification offered to all, should be included spiritual reading, especially that of Holy Scripture, of the works of the masters of the interior life, and of the lives of the saints. In this chapter we shall discuss this subject, and point out the dispositions necessary to draw profit from such reading.

Holy Scripture and the Life of the Soul

Error, heresy, and immorality often come from the influence of evil books, but "the reading of Sacred Letters," as St. Ambrose says, "is the life of the soul; Christ Himself declares it when He says: 'The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life' " (John 6:64)?

It was this reading that prepared St. Augustine to return to God when he heard the words: "Take and read." A passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans [2] gave him the decisive light which tore him away from sin and led him to conversion.

St. Jerome relates in a letter to Eustochium how, at the time when he was beginning to lead the monastic life near Antioch, he was led by a very great grace to the assiduous reading of the Scriptures. The elegance of profane writers still pleased him greatly; by preference he read the works of Cicero, Virgil, and Plautus. Then he received the following grace: during sleep he beheld himself, as it

[1] *Sermon* 3j.
[*] Rom. 13:13.

were, transported before the tribunal of God, who asked him severely who he was. "I am a Christian," Jerome replied. "You lie," said the sovereign Judge. "You are a Ciceronian; for where your treasure is, there is your heart also." And the order was given to scourge him. "Upon awakening," writes St. Jerome, "I felt, indeed, that this had been more than a dream, that it was a reality, since I bore on my shoulders the marks of the stripes I had received. Since that time I have read the Sacred Scriptures with greater ardor than I formerly read profane books." This experience explains St. Jerome's statement to Eustochium in another letter: "Let sleep surprise you only reading; fall asleep only on Sacred Scripture."

From what book can we better draw life than from Scripture, which has God for its Author? Especially the Gospels, the words of our Savior, the facts of His hidden, His apostolic, and His suffering life should be the living teaching to which the soul must ever turn. Christ knows how to make the loftiest and most divine things accessible to all by the simplicity with which He speaks. His word does not remain abstract and theoretical; it leads directly to true humility, to love of God and neighbor. Each word tells us that He seeks only the glory of Him who sent Him and the good of souls. The Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew (chaps. 5-7) and the discourse after the Last Supper in St. John (chaps. 14-18) should be read frequently.

If with humility, hope, and love, we read the divine words of Scripture, which are spirit and life, they contain for us a special grace that daily inclines us more to imitate the virtues of Christ, His meekness, patience, and heroic love on the cross. Besides the Holy Eucharist, the true food of the saints is to be found in the Scriptures: the word of God, transmitted by Flis only Son, the Word made flesh. Hidden under the letter is the living thought of God, which, if we are docile, the gifts of understanding and wisdom will make us penetrate and taste more and more.

After the Gospel, nothing is more nourishing than the divinely inspired commentary on it, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. They are the teachings of Christ lived by His first disciples, who were given the task of training us. These teachings are explained and adapted to the needs of the faithful. In the Acts is found the heroic life of the new-born Church, its diffusion in the midst of the greatest difficulties, constituting a lesson in confidence, valor, fidelity,

and abandonment. Where, other than in the Epistles, can we find more profound and living pages about the person and work of Christ (Col. i), the splendor of the life of the Church and the immensity of Christ's love for it (Eph. 1-3), about justification by faith in Christ (Rom. 1-11), about the eternal priesthood of Christ? (Heb., 1-9.)

If the ethical part of the Epistles is considered, where can we read more pressing exhortations to charity, to the duties of our state, to perseverance, to heroic patience, to sanctity, and surer rules of conduct for all,—superiors, equals, inferiors—also for the weak, for the guilty, and for false teachers? Where can we find a more vivid exposition of the duties of all Christians in regard to the Church? (I Pet. 4 f.)

Every Christian should know certain parts of the Old Testament, in particular the Psalms, which are still the prayer of the Church in the Divine Office, that prayer of reparative adoration for the contrite and humbled sinner, of ardent supplication and thanksgiving. Interior souls ought to read also the most beautiful pages of the Prophets, which the liturgy of Advent and Lent places before us, and in the Sapiential Books, the exhortations of uncreated Wisdom to the practice of the principal duties toward God and neighbor.

New lights and new strength will be found in the Scriptures, especially in the Gospels, when they are often reread with respect and love. God has put inexhaustible virtue in His word. When a person who has read a great deal and is tired of almost all books, approaches the close of life, he turns again to the Gospel as to the true prelude of the light which enlightens souls in eternal life.

The Spiritual Works of the Saints

Next to the Scriptures, the reading of the spiritual works of the saints greatly enlightens and warms the soul, because these works, though not composed under infallible inspiration, were written with the lights and the unction of the Holy Ghost. We should not ignore the chief spiritual works of St. Augustine,[3] St. Jerome,[4] Cas-

[3] *Confessiones, Soliloquia, De doctrina Christiana, De civitate Dei, Epistola ill, Enarrationes in Psalmos, In Sermonem Domini in monte* (Matt. 5), *In Joannem,* etc.

[4] *Epistolae;* especially cp. 22, to the virgin Eustochium.

sian,[8] St. Leo,[6] St. Benedict,[7] St. Gregory the Great,[8] St. Basil,[9] St. John Chrysostom,[10] Dionysius,[11] St. Maximus Confessor,[12] St. Anselm,[13] and St. Bernard.[14] Very useful also is an acquaintance with what most concerns the interior life in the writings of Richard of St. Victor,[15] Hugh of St. Cher,[16] St. Albert the Great,[17] St. Thomas Aquinas,[18] St. Bonaventure.[19] Profit may always be drawn from the *Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena,[20] the works of Tauler,[21] and those of Blessed Henry Suso,[22] Blessed Angela of Foligno,[23] Blessed John Ruysbroeck,[24] Thomas à Kempis, the probable author of *The Imitation.*

5 *Collationes.*

8 *Sermones.*

I Rule.

8 *Expositio in librum Job, sive moralium libri XXXV; Liber regulae pastoralis; Homiliae in Ezechielem.*

9 *De Spiritu Sancto; Regulae.*

10 *Homiliae, De sacerdotio.*

II De divinis nominibus; De ecclesiastica hierarchia; De mystica theologia.

12 Especially his *Commentaries* on Dionysius, his *Liber asceticus.*

13 *Cur Deus homo.* His meditations and prayers are rich in doctrine and unction.

14 *Sermones de tempore, de sanctis, in Cantica Canticorum; De consideratione; De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae; De diligendo Deo.*

15 *Benjamin minor,* seu de preparatione ad contemplationem; *Benjamin major,* seu de gratia contemplationis; *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum.*

18 *De vita spirituali; Ex commentariis B. Hugonis de Sancto Charo, O.P., super totam bibliam excerpta,* Curtante Fr. Dionysio Mésard, O.P., Pustet, 1910. An excellent work divided into four parts: on the purgative life; on the illuminative life; the unitive life; the spiritual life of priests.

17 *Commentarii in S. Scripturam,* especially *In Joannem; Comm. in Dionysium; Mariale; De sacrificio missae.*

18 *Commentarii in Psalmos, in Job, in Canticum Canticorum, in Matth.; in Joannem; in Epist. S. Pauli; In Summa theologica,* lia Ilae, de virtutibus theologicis et moralibus nec non de donis in speciali. *De perfectione spirituali; Officium SS. Sacramenti; Expositio in Symbol. Apost. et in Orationem dominicam.*

18 *De triplici via (seu Incendium amoris); Lignum vitae; Vitis mystica, Itinerarium mentis ad Deum; Breviloquium.*

20 *Dialogue; Letters.*

21 *Sermons;* critical edition in German by Vetter, 1910. *The Institutions were* not drawn up by Tauler, but contain the summary of his doctrine.

22 *Die Schriften der heiligen H. Suso,* published by Father Denifle, O.P.

23 *Visionum et instructionum liber.* This book speaks especially of the divine transcendence and of Christ's passion.

24 *Œuvres* (trans, from the Flemish by the Benedictines of St. Paul at Wisque). Cf. especially *Le miroir du salut eternal; Le livre des sept clôtures; L'ornement des noces étemelles.* Ruysbroeck is certainly one of the greatest mystics, but he can be comprehended only by advanced souls.

Among modern spiritual writers, one should read Louis Blosius, O.S.B.,[25] the Franciscan, Francisco de Osuna [28] (whose book served as a guide to St. Teresa), St. Ignatius Loyola,[27] St. Teresa,[28] St. John of the Cross,[29] St. Francis de Sales,[30] St. John Eudes.[31]

Finally, one should also read the spiritual writings of Bossuet,[32] those of the Dominicans, Louis of Granada,[33] Chardon,[34] Piny,[35] and Massoulié,[36] those of the Jesuits, L. Dupont,[37] Lallemant,[38]

[25] Cf. especially *A Book of Spiritual Instruction* (tr. by Bertrand Wilberforce, O.P.), which contains the substance of his other writings. Louis Blosius wrote a defense of Tauler's doctrine, which he explained in a way that renders it more accessible.

[28] *Abecedario espiritual,* 1528. See especially Vol. Ill, which served as a guide to St. Teresa.

[27] *The Spiritual Exercises,* a method to reform and transform the soul by conforming it to the divine Model. See also *The Tale of the Pilgrim* and the *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola.*

[28] *Obras de Santa Teresa, editadas y anotadas por el P. Silverio de S. Teresa,* 6 vols., Burgos, 1915-20; *Letters of St. Teresa.* All interior souls can and should read *The Way of Perfection* by St. Teresa.

[29] *Obras de San Juan de la Cruz,* edited by P. Silverio, 5 vols., Burgos, 1929-3'.

In these works, *The Ascent of Mount Cannel* shows especially the active purification of the soul which prepares for contemplation and which must continue with it. *The Dark Night* describes, together with the defects of beginners, the passive purification of the senses and that of the spirit. *The Living Flame of Love* describes what is lofty in the life of union. *A Spiritual Canticle* sums up in a lyrical form the doctrine of the other works.

[30] *Œuvres* published by the Religious of the Visitation of Annecy. The *Introduction to a Devout Life* describes the purgative life and shows how devotion and sanctity may be practiced in all states of life. The *Treatise on the Love of God* lifts souls even to the unitive way. *Les vrais entretiens spirituels,* composed for the Visitandines, do good to all religious souls.

[31] *Œuvres,* 12 vols., Paris, 1905. Disciple of Bérulle and of Condren, St. John Eudes links up the interior virtues with the devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. One should read *La vie et le royaume de Jésus dans les âmes chrétiennes; Le cœur admirable de la Mère de Dieu; Le mémorial de la vie ecclésiastique.*

[32] *Elévations sur les mystères; Méditations sur l'Evangile; Traité de la concupiscence; Lettres de direction; Les états d'oraison.*

[33] *The Sinners' Guide; Memorial of the Christian Life.*

[34] *La croix de Jésus,* new ed., 1937; *Les méditations sur la Passion.*

[36] *Le plus parfait* (abandonment); *La présence de Dieu; L'oraison du cœur; Etat du pur amour; La clef du pur amour; La vie cachée.*

[30] *Traité de la véritable oraison,* ed. Rousset (1900); *Méditations de saint Thomas sur les trois voies,* ed. Florand (1934).

[37] *Guide spirituel; De la perfection du chrétien en tous les états; De la perfection du chrétien dans l'état ecclésiastique; Méditations sur les mystères de notre foi.*

[38] *La doctrine spirituelle,* a very substantial work which shows how, by

Surin,[39] De Caussade,[40] and Grou,[41] the works of the writers of the French school of the seventeenth century, Bérulle,[42] Condren,[43] Bourgoing,[44] St. Vincent de Paul,[45] Olier,[46] Venerable Boudon,[47] those of Blessed Grignion de .Montfort,[48] and St. Alphonsus Liguori.[49]

We do not speak of more recent writers, whose principal works are known to all.

The Lives of the Saints

To the reading of books of spiritual doctrine should be joined that of the lives of the saints, which contain alluring examples that are always admirable and often imitable. Their deeds were often performed in most difficult circumstances by men and women with a nature like ours, who at the beginning had their weaknesses and defects, but in whom grace and charity gradually dominated nature by healing it, elevating it, and vivifying it. In them especially, we see the true meaning and import of the principle, that grace does not destroy nature (in so far as it is good), but perfects it. In them, especially at the end of the purgative and illuminative ways, we

purity of heart, docility to the Holy Ghost, the frequent and loving remembrance of God present in it, the soul reaches contemplation, an act of living faith enlightened by the gifts.

[38] *Les fondements de la vie spirituelle; La guide spirituelle,* in which the doctrine of Father Lallemant is developed; *Traité de l'amour de Dieu.*

[40] *Abandon à la divine Providence,* an admirable book which has done great good to many souls; *instructions spirituelles sur les divers états d'oraison.*

[41] *Maximes spirituelles; Méditations en forme de retraite sur l'amour de Dieu; Retraite spirituelle; Manuel des âmes intérieures.* The doctrine set forth in these works is identical with that of Father Lallemant.

[42] *Œuvres completes,* 1657 and 1856. Cf. especially *Le discours de l'état et des grandeurs de Jésus.*

[48] *L'idée du sacerdoce et du sacrifice.* Condren completes Bérulle, by showing in Jesus, the adorer of the Father, the principal priest of the sacrifice to which we ought daily to unite ourselves.

[44] *Vérités et excellences de Jésus-Christ* (meditations).

[45] *Correspondance; Entretiens,* published by Father Coste, 1920.

[48] *Le catéchisme chrétien pour la vie intérieure* (the crucifying virtues, the way of close union with our Lord); *La journée chrétienne; Le traité des Saints-Ordres; L'introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes.*

[47] *Le règne de Dieu en l'oraison mentale.*

[48] *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge; Le secret de Marie.*

[48] *Opere ascetiche,* new cd., Rome, 1933. Various editions in English.

see what is in the unitive life the true harmony of nature and grace, the normal prelude of eternal beatitude.

In these lives we must seek especially what is imitable, and in what is extraordinary we must see a divine sign given to draw us from our lethargy and make us understand what is most profound and most lofty in an ordinary Christian life when the soul is truly docile to the Holy Ghost. The sufferings of the stigmatics thus recall to us what our Savior's passion should be for us and how we ought daily to say with more meaning at the end of the Stations of the Cross: "Sancta Mater, istud agas, Crucifixi fige plagas cordi meo valide." The extraordinary grace which enabled many saints, as St. Catherine of Siena, to drink deeply from the wound of the heart of Jesus should recall to us what a fervent Communion should be for us, and how each of our Communions should be substantially more fervent than the preceding one in our ascent toward God.

The examples of the saints, their humility, patience, confidence, overflowing charity, are more efficacious in making us practice virtue than abstract doctrine is. "Universals do not move."

We ought to read especially the lives of the saints written by saints, such as that of St. Francis of Assisi written by St. Bonaventure, that of St. Catherine of Siena by Blessed Raymond of Capua, her director, and the life of St. Teresa by herself.

Dispositions for Profitable Spiritual Reading

A prayer well said before we begin to read will obtain for us the actual grace to read Sacred Scripture or spiritual books with a spirit of faith, avoiding all useless curiosity, intellectual vanity, the tendency to criticize what we read rather than to profit by it. The spirit of faith will make us seek God Himself in spiritual works.

We must also, with a sincere and keen desire for perfection, apply to ourselves what we read, instead of being content with a theoretical knowledge of it. Then, even while reading what has to do with "the little virtues," as St. Francis de Sales calls them, we shall reap great profit, for all the virtues are connected with the highest of all, charity. It is also well for advanced souls to reread occasionally what is suitable for beginners; on second reading they will see this teaching under a superior light and will be astonished at all that is virtually contained in it, as, for example, in the first lines of the

little catechism on the reason why we were created and placed in the world: "To know God, to love Him, to serve Him, and thus to obtain eternal life."

It is also well for beginners to catch a glimpse of the extreme loftiness of Christian perfection, without, however, covering the ground too quickly and trying to go faster than grace. Perfection should at least be partly seen, because the end to be attained, which is last in the order of execution, is first in the order of intention or of desire. One must from the beginning wish to attain sanctity, since we are all called to that sanctity which would permit us to enter heaven immediately after death. No one, in fact, will go to purgatory except for sins which he might have avoided.

If beginners and the advanced have a keen desire to sanctify themselves, they will find what is suitable for them in Holy Scripture and in the spiritual writings of the saints. While reading, they will hear the teaching of the interior Master. That this may be so, they must read slowly and not devour books; they must be penetrated with what they read. Then spiritual reading will be transformed little by little into prayer, into intimate conversation with the interior Guest.[60]

It is also well after a few years to reread the very good books which have already done us much good. Life is short: we should be content to read and read again whatever bears the mark of God, and not to lose our time on things that are lifeless and of no value. St. Thomas Aquinas never wearied of rereading the conferences of Cassian. How many souls have gained greatly by often rereading *The Imitation!* To be profoundly penetrated by one such book is far better than to read all spiritual writers superficially.

Moreover, as St. Bernard says, we should read with piety, seeking not only to know divine things, but to taste them.[51] St. Matthew (24:15) says: "He that readeth, let him understand." Let us ask God for the light to understand clearly. The disciples of Emmaus[50]

[50] St. Benedict *(Rule,* chap. 48) says that reading thus made is the first degree of the ascending series: "Reading, thought, study, meditation, prayer, contemplation." Cf. Dorn Delatte, *The Rule of St. Benedict* (a commentary); tr. by Dom Justin McCann, 1921.

St. Thomas, who received his first training with the Benedictines, kept this gradation which ends in contemplation (cf. Ila Ilae, q. 180, a.3).

[51] "When reading, let him seek not so much learning as savor." *In spec, monach.*

did not understand the meaning of the prophecies until Christ opened their minds. This is why St. Bernard says to us: "Let prayer interrupt reading," then truly this reading will be a spiritual food and will prepare the soul for prayer.

Finally, we must begin without delay to put into practice what we read. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:24, 26), our Lord declared: "Everyone therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. . . . And everyone that heareth these My words, and doth them not, shall be like the foolish man that built his house upon the sand." "For not the hearers of the law," says St. Paul, "are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified." [82] Then reading bears fruit. In the parable of the sower we are told: "And other some fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundredfold. . . . But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience." [03] According to this parable, some spiritual reading may produce thirtyfold, other sixtyfold, and still other a hundredfold. Such was, for example, the reading which Augustine did when he heard the words: "Take and read." He opened the epistles of St. Paul, which were lying on the table, and read these words (Rom. 13:13 f.): "Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." From that moment his heart was changed; he retired for some time into solitude and asked for baptism. This was truly the hundredfold, which since then has nourished thousands of souls.

[112] Rom. 2:13. Jas. 1:22: "Be *ye* doers of the word, and not hearers only."
[53] Luke 8:8, 15.

CHAPTER XVII

Spiritual Direction

SPIRITUAL direction should be numbered among the exterior means of sanctification. We shall discuss its necessity in general and also in the different stages of the spiritual life, and then we shall recall the desired qualities of a director and the duties of the soul that is being directed.

The Necessity of Direction

Though it is not an absolutely necessary means for the sanctification of souls, direction is the normal means of spiritual progress. In constituting the Church, Christ willed that the faithful should be sanctified by submission to the pope and the bishops with respect to external jurisdiction, and in matters of conscience to confessors, who point out the means needed in order not to fall back into sin and to make progress in virtue.

Pope Leo XIII,[1] following Cassian and St. Francis de Sales, recalls on this subject the fact that St. Paul himself received a guide from the Lord. When Paul was converted, Jesus did not at once reveal His designs to him, but sent him to Ananias at Damascus to learn what he should do.[2]

St. Basil says: "Employ all diligence and use the greatest circumspection in finding a man who may serve you as a very sure guide in the work of leading a holy life which you wish to undertake. Choose one who knows how to show souls of good will the straight road toward God." [3] He says elsewhere: "To believe that one does not need counsel is great pride." [4]

1 *Testem benevolentiae,* January *n,* 1899.
2 Acts 9:6.
3 *Sermo de abd. rer.*
4 See *I Cap. I Isaiae.*

St. Jerome writes to Rusticus: "Do not be your own master and do not set out upon a way that is entirely new for you without a guide; otherwise you will soon go astray." St. Augustine also says: "As a blind man cannot follow the good road without a leader, no one can walk without a guide." [5] No one is a good judge in his own cause by reason of secret pride which may make him deviate from the right path.

In his conferences, Cassian says that anyone who relies on his own judgment will never reach perfection and will not be able to avoid the snares of the devil.[6] He concludes that the best means to triumph over the most dangerous temptations is to make them known to a wise counselor who has the grace of state to enlighten us.[7] In reality, to manifest them to one who has a right to hear them often suffices to make them disappear.

St. Bernard says that novices in the religious life should be lead by a father director who instructs, directs, consoles, and encourages them.[8] In one of his letters he goes so far as to say: "He who constitutes himself his own director, becomes the disciple of a fool." And he adds: "As far as I am concerned, I declare that it is easier and safer for me to command many others than myself alone." [9] Our self-love leads us less astray, in truth, in conducting others than in dealing with ourselves, and if we knew well how to apply to ourselves what we tell others, we would make far greater progress.

In the fourteenth century, St. Vincent Ferrer expressed the same thought in his *De vita spirituali* (Part II, chap. i). "Our Lord," he says, "without whom we can do nothing, will never grant His grace to one who, having at his disposition a man capable of instructing and directing him, neglects this powerful means of sanctification, believing that he is sufficient to himself and that he can by his own powers seek and find the things useful to salvation. . . . A person having a director whom he obeys completely and unreservedly will reach his goal much more easily and rapidly than he could alone, even with the aid of a very keen intellect and learned books on spiritual matters. . . . In general, all who have reached perfection, have followed this road of obedience, unless, by a privilege and singular

[6] *Sermo 112 de temp.*
• *Collationes,* II, 14 f., 24.
[7] *Ibid.,* II, 2, 5, 7, io.
• *De diversis, sermo* VIII, 7.
• *Epist.* 87, no. 7.

grace, God Himself instructed some souls that had no one to direct them."

St. Teresa,[10] St. John of the Cross,[11] and St. Francis de Sales [12] teach the same doctrine. St. Francis de Sales says that we cannot judge our own cause impartially by reason of a complacency that is "so secret and imperceptible as not to be discovered even by those who are tainted therewith." [13] Likewise a person who has been in a closed room for a long time does not notice that the air has become vitiated, whereas one who comes in from outside notices it immediately.

We understand quite well that we need a guide if we intend to climb a mountain. He is not less necessary for climbing to the summit of spiritual perfection, the more so as in this ascent we must avoid the snares laid by Satan, who wishes to prevent us from ascending.

St. Alphonsus, in his excellent book, *Praxis confessarii* (nos. 121-71), indicates the principal object of direction: mortification, the manner of receiving the sacraments, prayer, the practice of virtues, the sanctification of ordinary actions.

The testimony of all these authorities shows clearly the general need of direction. We shall obtain a clearer idea of this necessity by considering the three stages of the interior life, or the spiritual needs of beginners, of proficients, and of the perfect.

The Direction of Beginners

Beginners need wise, firm, and paternal direction for their formation. In religious orders, this direction is the special duty of masters and mistresses of novices.

Later its necessity is felt less, except at difficult periods when some change takes place, or again when an important decision must be made.

Beginners must evidently be forewarned against relapses and also against two contradictory defects. Some, who receive sensible consolations in prayer, confound them with graces of a higher order and presumptuously wish to cover the ground rapidly, and without

Life of St. Teresa by Herself, chap. 13.
11 *Sentences et avis spirituels,* no. 229.
»» *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part HI, chap. 28.
2· *Ibid.*

delay to reach the life of union without passing through the indispensable degrees.[14] They must be reminded of the necessity of humility and be told that progress toward perfection is the work of a lifetime. No one can fly before he has wings, and no one begins the construction of a church with the spires, but with the foundation.[15] If the end to be obtained is first in the order of intention or of desire, it is, in reality, last in achievement, and the most modest means indispensable for reaching it must not be neglected.

Other beginners take a secret pride in austerity, as the Jansenists did, and practice such excessive exterior mortifications that they compromise their health. Then, in their efforts to take care of themselves, they fall into laxity and go from one extreme to the other. They need to learn the measure of Christian discretion and must understand that it is not sufficient to have, over and above a keen sensibility, the three theological virtues, but that it is necessary also to have between these two domains the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, so that sensibility may gradually become disciplined and these superficial and passing impulses may not be confounded with the lofty aspirations of living faith, hope, and charity.

Direction is particularly necessary in this period of prolonged aridity, in which meditation becomes difficult, and quite severe temptations against chastity and patience also arise, accompanied at times by contradictions from without. According to St. John of the Cross,[16] this trial marks the passage from the purgative way of

[14] St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps. 1-7: Defects of Beginners: inclination to pride, spiritual gluttony, envy, anger, sloth.

[16] St. Teresa *(The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 2) teaches us also clearly to distinguish between the divine tastes produced by infused contemplation and the satisfactions or consolations of active prayer. The divine delights come directly from the action of God; consolations, from our activity aided by grace: "When His Majesty wills to bestow on us any supernatural favors, we experience the greatest peace, calm, and sweetness in the inmost depths of our being." Moreover, the effects are not less different than their origin. "No sooner has this heavenly water begun to issue from its source . . . than it seems to expand us and enlarge us internally, and benefit us in an inexplicable manner; nor does even the soul itself understand what it receives. It is conscious of what may be described as a certain fragrance, as if within its inmost depths were a brazier sprinkled with sweet perfumes." The Lord wishes thus to make the soul know that He is very close to it. To confound sensible consolations with these divine delights would be a grievous mistake.

" *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

beginners to the illuminative way of proficients, but on condition that the three signs, which a good director can discern, are found in it. These three signs, which we shall speak of farther on, are the following: (1) When we find no comfort in the things of God, and also none in created things. (2) When the memory dwells ordinarily on God with a keen desire for perfection and the fear of not serving God. (3) When meditation is not possible and one feels inclined to a simple gaze on God. At the time of this crisis, which should be in the nature of a second conversion, it is well to pay close attention to a good director in order to traverse this difficult period generously and not to become a retarded soul. Farther on we shall discuss this subject at greater length.[17]

The Direction of Proficients and the Perfect

The necessity of a guide for certain periods of the spiritual life of the advanced confirms what we have just said about its necessity for beginners. We may with profit state this confirmation here.

Direction may customarily be given more rapidly to proficients because the proficient has a greater knowledge of the spiritual life and can briefly explain the point on which he needs counsel. The director then becomes the witness of the soul's life and progress; he should be the instrument of the Holy Ghost in order to make sure that the soul is docile to His inspirations. To do this, the director should seek to know well the action of the interior Master in given souls that he may discern in each, as far as is possible, the good and the bad, the dominant defect to be combated and the special attraction of grace to be followed.

Recourse should be had to the director especially during the annual retreat in order to discuss with him in all frankness what constitutes the basis of the life of the soul, and to make sure of not falling into the defects of the advanced—hidden pride and presumption—which may become the source of great illusions.[18]

The proficient also experiences periods in which he particularly

[17] At the beginning of Part III: Entrance into the Illuminative Way (The Night of the Senses).

[18] Cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. II, chap. 2: Certain Imperfections of Proficients.

needs a good guide; especially is this the case when he has to pass through the trials which mark the entrance into the unitive way, and which St. John calls the passive purification of the spirit. This purification appears under various forms that are more or less accentuated. Generally it is a prolonged privation of sensible and also spiritual consolations. During this period strong temptations often arise against faith, hope, and fraternal charity, and even against the love of God. Evidently if a person is to pass through this difficult period, the help of a good director is highly desirable in order not to fall back at this time but rather to make progress. And he who can direct others during such a trial, would not be able to direct himself, for here there is no longer "any road traced out in advance," as St. John of the Cross [19] says; one must follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and not confuse it with something that might resemble it. At this time, souls given to prayer have a more special need of an enlightened and experienced director. St. Teresa felt the need of opening her soul completely to learned men, versed in the things of the interior life, to make certain of her docility to the Holy Ghost.[20] The perfect themselves feel the need of this help to discover the harmony between passivity under the divine action and the activity which the Lord asks of them in order faithfully to practice the maxim: "fidelity and abandonment." They feel the need of direction that they may with profound humility keep alive in their hearts the love of the cross.

We have here only touched on the direction of proficients in order to indicate that, if it is necessary for them, with far greater reason is it necessary for beginners.[21]

The Qualities of the Director and the Duties of the One Being Directed

St. Francis de Sales says on the subject of a director: "He must be a man of charity, learning, and prudence; if any one of these

[10] Cf. the Prologue of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the sketch placed by the saint at the beginning of this work.

[20] *Life,* chap. 13: "They who walk in the way of prayer have the greater need of learning; and the more spiritual they arc, the greater is that need."

[21] Cf. *infra,* Part IV: The Entrance into the Unitive Way (The Night of the Spirit).

three qualities be wanting in him, there is danger." 22 St. Teresa expresses the same opinion.23

His charity ought to be disinterested and to incline him, not to draw hearts to himself but to lead them to God. On this point, Tauler is exacting and says that certain directors who draw souls to themselves are like hunting dogs that eat the hare instead of bringing it back to their master. Whereupon the hunter whips them soundly. The director's charitable kindness should not be weakness; it should be firm and fearless in speaking the truth in order to lead souls effectively to goodness. Neither should he lose his time in useless conversations or letters, but go straight to the point for the good of the soul.

In addition, he should have a knowledge of the spiritual life, be penetrated with the teachings of the great masters of the interior life, and be a good psychologist.24

That the director may be the instrument of the Holy Ghost, he ought prudently to discern in souls the dominant defect to be avoided and the supernatural attraction to be followed. For this purpose, he must pray for light, especially in difficult cases, and, if he is humble, he will receive the graces of state. He will see that he must stimulate some and moderate the ardor of others, teaching the

22 *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part I, chap. 4.

23 Cf. *Life,* chap. 13: "It is of great consequence that the director should be prudent—I mean, of sound understanding—and a man of experience. If, in addition to this, he is a learned man, it is a very great matter. But if these three qualities cannot be had together, the first two are the most important, because learned men may be found with whom we can communicate when it is necessary. I mean, that for beginners learned men are of little use, if they arc not men of prayer. I do not say that they are to have nothing to do with learned men. . . . Learning is a great tiring. . . . From silly devotions, God deliver us!"

24 The study of psychology is particularly necessary for him when he has to direct persons affected with hysteria, psychasthenia, or neurasthenia. He should also know what mental troubles come from certain maladies, such as Basedow's disease (hypertrophy of the thyroid glands) and other disorders in the functioning of the endocrine glands, especially at the critical age. Such disorders may give rise to a chronic and progressive intoxication, which engenders some mental confusion accompanied by fixed ideas.

Cf. Robert de Sinéty, S.J., *Psychopcthologie et direction* (Paris, Bcauchesne, 1934). The author mentions also religious psychopathology, the precursory symptoms of psychopathy, and offers practical advice for the direction of psychopaths.

latter not to confound sentimentality with love, which proves itself by works.

When he directs generous souls, his prudence must avoid two dangers: that of wishing to lead all pious souls indiscriminately and rapidly to give themselves to contemplative prayer, and that of imagining that it is useless to concern oneself with this question. Here a person must advance neither too slowly nor too rapidly, but must examine whether there exist in the soul the three signs which we have pointed out, following the teaching of St. John of the Cross and several other great masters, in order to pass from discursive meditation to contemplation. Before these appear, it is well and sufficient to remind souls that they must be docile to the inspirations of the interior Master, as they are manifestly conformable to their vocation.

The duties of the directed soul spring obviously from what we have just said; the person who is being directed ought to respect his director as the representative of God, and to avoid two extremes opposed to respect for a director: sharp criticisms and excessive familiarity. This respect should be accompanied by a simple yet entirely spiritual filial affection, which excludes petty jealousy and the desire to be specially loved.[23]

The person who is being directed should also have filial confidence in his director and great openness of heart towards him. As St. Francis de Sales so well explains it: "Open your heart to him with all sincerity and fidelity, manifesting clearly and explicitly the state of your conscience without fiction or dissimulation." [26]

Lastly, he must be very docile in following the counsel given; otherwise he would be following his own will rather than that of God. It is not forbidden to explain that there is serious difficulty in putting such or such advice into practice; but after such explanation, he must subordinate his judgment to that of the director. Strictly speaking, the director may be mistaken; but the person under his direction will not be mistaken in obeying him, unless he advises something contrary to faith and morals. In that event a change of director is imperative.

Not without grave reason, however, should anyone change his

[23] Sr. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part 1, chap. 4.
[26] *Ibid.*

director or confessor. The change should certainly not be made because of inconstancy, pride, false shame, or curiosity. But this may be done if a person perceives that his director's views are too natural and that his affection is excessively sensible, and that he has not the requisite learning, prudence, and discretion.

Except in these cases, a person should keep as far as possible a certain continuity in direction that there may truly be continuity in it and perseverance on the right road. We should not give up a good guide because he reproves us for our good. It may be well to recall what St. Louis used to say to his son: "Go to confession frequently; choose virtuous and learned confessors who know how to instruct you in what you ought to do or avoid, and give your confessors leave to reprove and admonish you freely." Such a statement gives evidence of good, holy, and strong affection without any admixture of sentimentality, which is an affectation of sentiment.

Under these conditions, the director will be able to be the instrument of the Holy Ghost to control His action in us, and to make us ever more docile to divine inspirations. Thus we will truly advance along the narrow way which becomes broader and broader as we draw near to the infinite goodness of God to which it leads.

PART II

The Purification of the Soul in Beginners

We have spoken of the principles of the interior life, that is, of its sources and its end, which is Christian perfection; we must now treat in particular of each of the three ages of the spiritual life, and first of all of the purification of the soul in beginners.

We shall see, in this regard, what characterizes this age of the interior life, and shall speak at some length of the active purification of the sensitive part and of the intellectual part of the soul, of the use of the sacraments, of the prayer of beginners, and lastly of the more or less well-borne passive purification of the senses which marks the transition to the age of proficients, or the entrance into the illuminative way. In this connection, we shall have to speak of the abuse of graces. Beginners who have become retarded and tepid souls, are the ones that do not reach the higher spiritual age. This part of spirituality is very significant from a practical point of view, for many souls remain greatly retarded because they have not put it into practice, whereas those that really profit by it make great progress.

At this stage it is not important to read many books, to have many ideas, but it is important to become penetrated with the fundamental principles set forth in some substantial book and to put them generously into practice without turning back. Our Lord Himself stated this expressly at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: "Everyone therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his Louse upon a rock. . . . And everyone that heareth these My words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house. And it fell, and great was the fall thereof." [1]

When anyone reads the lives of beatified and canonized servants of God, in particular of several of those who in recent times have been proposed to us as models, he is impressed with the fact that many did not have great culture and had not read many books, but that they were profoundly penetrated with the Gospel, and had thus received its spirit, and that they practiced it with admirable generosity, at times in a very simple form of life which recalls that of St. Joseph. They thus attained a lofty wisdom, which at times showed forth in the profound realism of their reflections, and in an ardent charity that was most fruitful for the salvation of souls.

[1] Matt. 7:24-27.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Spiritual Age of Beginners

WE HAVE seen that St. Thomas, when speaking of the three ages of the spiritual life, remarks that "at first it is incumbent on man to occupy himself chiefly with avoiding sin and resisting his concupiscences, which move him in opposition to charity." [1]

The Christian in the state of grace, who begins to give himself to the service of God and to tend toward the perfection of charity according to the demands of the supreme precept, has a mentality or state of soul which can be described by observing particularly knowledge of self and of God, love of self and of God.

Self-Knowledge and Knowledge of God

Beginners have an initial knowledge of themselves; little by little they discern the defects they have, the remains of sins that have already been forgiven, and new failings that are more or less deliberate and voluntary. If these beginners are generous, they seek, not to excuse themselves, but to correct themselves, and the Lord shows them their wretchedness and poverty, making them understand, however, that they must consider it only in the light of divine mercy, which exhorts them to advance. They must daily examine their consciences and learn to overcome themselves that they may not follow the unconsidered impulse of their passions.

However, they know themselves as yet only in a superficial way. They have not discovered what a treasure baptism placed in their souls, and they arc ignorant of all the self-love and the often unconscious egoism still continuing in them and revealing itself from time to time under a sharp vexation or reproach. Often they have a clearer perception of this self-love in others than in themselves;

[1] *Summa,* IIa IIae, <]. 14, a.9.

they ought to remember Christ's words: "Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?" [2] The beginner bears in himself a diamond embedded in a mass of gross material, and he does not yet know the value of the diamond or all the defects of the other material. God loves him far more than he believes, but with a strong love that has its exigencies and that demands abnegation if the soul is to reach true liberty of spirit.

The beginner rises gradually to a certain knowledge of God which is still very dependent on sensible things. He knows God in the mirror of the natural world or in that of the parables: for example, in those of the prodigal son, of the lost sheep, of the good shepherd. This is the straight movement of elevation toward God, taking its point of departure from a simple, sensible fact. It is not yet the spiral movement rising toward God by the consideration of the various mysteries of salvation, nor is it the circular movement of contemplation that ever returns to the radiating divine goodness, as the eagle likes to look at the sun while describing the same circle several times in the air.[8]

The beginner is not yet familiar with the mysteries of salvation, with those of the redeeming Incarnation, of the life of the Church. He cannot yet feel habitually inclined to see therein the radiation of the divine goodness. However, he sometimes has this view while considering our Savior's passion, but he does not yet penetrate the depths of the mystery of the redemption. His view of the things of God is still superficial; he has not reached maturity of spirit.

The Love of God in Its Early Stages

In this state there is a proportionate love of God. Truly generous beginners love the Lord with a holy fear of sin which makes them flee mortal sin, and even deliberate venial sins, by the mortification of the senses and of the inordinate passions, or of the threefold concupiscence of the flesh, the eyes, and pride. This sign indicates that they have the beginning of a deep, voluntary love.

Nevertheless, a number practically neglect necessary mortification, and resemble a man who would like to begin climbing a moun-

[2] Matt. 7:3.
[8] Cf. Ha Ilae, q. 180, a.6.

tain, not from the base of the mountain but halfway up the side. When they do this, they ascend in their imagination only, not in reality; they travel rapidly, and their first enthusiasm will die out as quickly as burning straw. They will believe that they have a knowledge of spiritual things and will abandon them after having barely examined them superficially. This is, alas, frequently the case.

If, on the contrary, the beginner is generous and seriously wishes to advance, though not wishing to go more quickly than grace or to practice beyond the bounds of obedience an excessive mortification inspired by secret pride, it is not unusual for him to receive as recompense sensible consolations in prayer or in the study of divine things. The Lord thus conquers his sensibility, since he still lives chiefly by it. Sensible grace, so called because it reacts on the sensibility, turns it from dangerous things and draws it toward our Lord and His holy Mother. At these times, the generous beginner already loves God with his whole heart, but not yet with his whole soul, with all his strength, or with all his mind. Spiritual writers often speak of this "milk of consolation" which is then given. St. Paul himself says: "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto little ones in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not meat; for you are not able as yet." [4]

Then what generally happens? Almost all beginners, on receiving these sensible consolations, take too much complacency in them, as if they were an end, not a means. They then fall into a certain spiritual gluttony accompanied by rash haste and curiosity in the study of divine things, by unconscious pride that makes them wish to talk about these things as if they were already masters of the subject. Then, says St. John of the Cross,[5] the seven capital sins reappear, no longer under their gross form but as they apply to spiritual things.[6] They are so many obstacles to true and solid piety.

What follows from this? According to the logic of the spiritual life, it follows that a second conversion is necessary, that described by St. John of the Cross under the name of the passive purification of the senses "common to the greater number of beginners" [7] in

[4] See I Cor. 3: 1 f.

[5] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps. 1-7.

[6] In others they reappear in regard to the things of the intellectual life, by unconscious self-seeking in study.

[7] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.

order to introduce them into "the illuminative way of proficients, where God nourishes the soul by infused contemplation." 8

This purification is manifested by a prolonged sensible aridity in which the beginner is stripped of the sensible consolations wherein he delighted too greatly. If in this aridity there is a keen desire for God, for His reign in us, and the fear of offending Him, it is a sign that a divine purification is taking place. And this is clearer still if to this keen desire for God is added difficulty in prayer, in making multiple and reasoned considerations, and tbe inclination to look simply at God.9 This inclination is the third sign, which indicates that the second conversion is taking place and that the soul is raised toward a higher form of life, which is that of the illuminative way of proficients.

If the soul bears this purification well, its sensibility submits more and more to the spirit. Often it must then generously repulse temptations against chastity and patience, virtues that have their seat in the sensitive appetites and that are strengthened by this struggle.

In this crisis the Lord tills the soul, so to speak; He greatly deepens the furrow He traced at the moment of justification or the first conversion. He extirpates the evil roots or remains of sin. He shows the vanity of the things of the world, of the quest for honors and dignities. Gradually a new life begins, as in the natural order when the child becomes an adolescent.

This crisis is, however, more or less well borne; many persons are not generous enough and may become retarded souls. Others follow divine inspiration with docility and become proficients.

Such are the chief distinctive marks of the spiritual age of beginners: a knowledge of self still superficial; an initial knowledge of God as yet very dependent on sensible things; a love of God manifesting itself by the struggle to flee sin. If this struggle is generous, it is as a rule rewarded by sensible consolations, on which one too often dwells. Then the Lord takes them away and by this spoliation introduces one into a spiritual life that is more detached from rhe senses. It is easy to see the logical and vital sequence of the phases through which the soul must pass. It is not a mechanical juxtaposition of successive states, but the organic development of the interior

8 *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

0 *Ibid.,* chap. 9: The three signs of the passive purification of the senses, in which infused contemplation begins.

life which thus becomes more and more an intimate conversation of the soul, no longer only with itself but with God.

The Generosity Required in Beginners

Of great importance to note here is the generosity necessary in the beginner from the very first moment if he is to reach intimate union with God and the penetrating and sweet contemplation of divine things.

On this subject we read in *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena: "You were all invited, generally and in particular, by My Truth, when He cried in the Temple, saying: 'Whosoever thirstetb, let him come to Me and drink, for I am the fountain of the water of life.' . . . So that you are invited to the fountain of living water of grace, and it is right for you, with perseverance, to keep by Him who is made for you a bridge, not being turned back by any contrary wind that may arise, either of prosperity or adversity, and to persevere till you find Me, who am the giver of the water of life, by means of this sweet and loving Word, Aly only-begotten Son." [10]

St. Thomas speaks likewise when he comments on the words: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." "The Lord," he says, "wishes us to thirst after that justice which consists in rendering to every man and to God first of all what is His due. He wishes us never to be satiated on earth . . . but rather that our desire should grow always. . . . Blessed are they that have this insatiable desire; they will receive eternal life and here below an abundance of spiritual goods in the accomplishment of the precepts, according to the words of the Master: [11] 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work.' " [12]

The Angelic Doctor says again in his commentary on St. John, 7:37: "All that thirst are invited when our Lord says: 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' Isaias had said: 'All you that thirst, come to the (living) waters.' [13] He calls those who thirst, for it is they who desire to serve God. God does not accept a forced

[10] *Dialogue,* chap. 53.
[11] John 4:34.
li In Matthaeum 5:6.
*' Isa. 55: i.

service, but He 'loveth a cheerful giver.'[14] He calls not only some, but all who thirst; and He invites them to drink this spiritual beverage which is divine wisdom, capable of satiating our desires. And once we have found this divine wisdom, we shall wish to give it to others.[15] This is why He says to us: 'He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith: Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' "[10]

To reach this overflowing spring, one must thirst for virtue and walk generously along the narrow way of abnegation, in the spiritual way which is narrow for the senses, but which, for the spirit, becomes immense like God Himself to whom it leads. The road to perdition, on the other hand, while broad at first for the senses, in turn becomes narrower and narrower for the spirit and leads to hell.[11]

St. Teresa, recalling these same words of the Master: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink," likewise writes: "Remember, our Lord invited 'any man': He is truth itself; His word cannot be doubted. If all had not been included, He would not have addressed everybody, nor would He have said: 'Let all men come, for they will lose nothing by it, and I will give to drink to those I think fit for it.' But as He said unconditionally: 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me,' I feel sure that, unless they stop halfway, none will fail to drink of this living water. May our Lord, who has promised to grant it us, give us grace to seek it as we ought, for His own sake."[18] In the same chapter the saint says: "When God gives you this water, sisters, this comparison will please you, and you will understand, as those do who drink of it, how genuine love of God that is powerful and freed from earthly dross rises above mortal things and is sovereign over all the elements of this world. . . . Our souls are so dear to Him that He prevents their running into danger while He is bestowing this grace on them. He at once calls them to His side, and in a single instant shows them more truths and gives them a clearer knowledge of the nothingness of all things than we

14 See II Cor. 9:7.

15 St. Thomas, *In Joannem* 7:37: "All this is spiritual refection in the knowledge of divine wisdom and truth; likewise, in the fulfilling of desires. . . . Moreover, the fruit of this invitation is the overflowing of good on others."

10 John 7:38.

17 St. Thomas, *In Matth.* 7:14.

18 *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 19.

could gain for ourselves in many years." In chapter 21, the saint adds: "Let us return to speak of those who wish to travel by this path to the very end, and to the fount itself, where they will drink of the water of life. Although there are books written on the subject, yet I do not think it will be waste of time to speak of it here. How must one begin? I maintain that this is the chief point; in fact, that everything depends on people having a great and a most resolute determination never to halt until they reach their journey's end, happen what may, whatever the consequences are, cost what it will, let who will blame them, whether they reach the goal or die on the road, or lose heart to bear the trials they encounter, or the earth itself goes to pieces beneath their feet."

St. John of the Cross expresses himself in like manner in the prologue of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and in *The Living Flame of Love.*[19]

The generosity of which all these great saints speak in the quotations given is none other than the virtue of magnanimity; but it is no longer only that described by Aristotle; it is infused Christian magnanimity described by St. Thomas in IIa IIae, q. 129 of the *Summa.*

The magnanimous man, says the saint, seeks great things worthy of honor, but he considers that honors themselves are practically nothing.[20] He does not let himself be exalted by prosperity or cast down by difficulties. Is there anything greater on earth than genuine Christian perfection? The magnanimous man dreads neither obstacles nor critics nor scorn, if they must be borne for a great cause. He does not allow himself to be at all intimidated by freethinkers, and pays no attention to their utterances. He pays far more attention to truth than to the opinions of men which are often false. If this generosity is not always understood by those who wish an easier life, it has, nevertheless, a true value in itself. And if it is united to humility, it pleases God and cannot fail of a reward.

St. Francis de Sales, in his *Fifth Conference,* speaks admirably

19 Stanza 2.

20 St. Thomas says (IIa IIae, q.129, a.4, c. and ad 311m) that magnanimity leads a man to wish to practice all the virtues with true greatness of soul. It is thus like the ornament of al) the virtues, and one sees thereby its general influence, that indeed attributed by spiritual authors to generosity. *Ibid.,* q. 134, a.2 ad 311111; and la IIae, q.66, a.4 ad jum.

of generosity in its relations with humility, which ought always to accompany it. He says:

> Humility believes it can do nothing, considering the knowledge of our poverty and weakness ---; and, on the contrary, generosity makes us say with St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." Humility makes us distrust ourselves, and generosity makes us trust in God. . . . There are people who amuse themselves with a false and silly humility, which hinders them from seeing in themselves the good that God has given them. They are very wrong in this; for the goods that God has placed in us should be recognized . . . that we may glorify the divine goodness which bestowed them on us. . . . Humility which does not produce generosity is indubitably false. . . . Generosity relies on trust in God and courageously undertakes to do all that is commanded --- no matter how difficult it may be. . . . What can hinder me from succeeding, it says, since the Scriptures declare that "He, who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus"? [21]

Such ought to be the generosity of beginners. All the saints hold the same doctrine. Christ Himself declared: "No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." [22] One must belong to those of whom He said: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill"; here on earth they will taste, as it were, the prelude of eternal life and by working for the salvation of others will inspire in them a holy desire for this life.

21 Phil. i:6.
22 Luke 9:62.

CHAPTER XIX

Practical Naturalism and Mortification According to the Gospel

WE HAVE given a general idea of the spiritual age of beginners; now we shall speak of the principal work imposed on them that they may avoid falling back into sin. With this end in view, we must get a just idea of the disorder that sin, under its multiple forms, really is and also of its roots and consequences which may continue to exist in us for a long time.

First of all, we must note here two extreme and erroneous tendencies: on the one hand, the frequent, practical naturalism into which the quietists fell; on the other hand, the proud Jansenist austerity that does not spring from the love of God. Truth rises like a summit between these two extremes, which represent the opposing deviations of error.

Practical Naturalism: of Action and of Inaction

Practical naturalism, which is the negation of the spirit of faith in the conduct of life, tends to revive under more or less accentuated forms, as it did some years ago in Americanism and Modernism. In several works that appeared during that period, mortification and the vows of religion were disparaged; they were considered not a deliverance which favors the upward flight of the interior life, but a hindrance to the apostolate. We were asked: Why speak so much of mortification, if Christianity is a doctrine of life; of renunciation, if Christianity ought to assimilate all human activity instead of destroying it; of obedience, if Christianity is a doctrine of liberty? These passive virtues, they said, have such importance only for negative spirits that arc incapable of undertaking anything and th·" possess only the force of inertia.

Why, they added, depreciate our natural activity? Is our nature not good, does it not come from God, is it not inclined to love Him above all else? Our passions themselves, the movements of our sensible appetites (desire or aversion, joy or sadness) are neither good nor bad; they become so according to the intention of our will. They are forces to be utilized; they must not be mortified, but regulated and modulated. They said that such is the teaching of St. Thomas, very different from that of so many spiritual writers, quite different, too, from Book III, chap. 54, of *The Imitation* on "The Different Motions of Nature and Grace." In thus opposing the author of *The Imitation,* they forget the words of our Savior: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal." [1]

They asked, moreover, why one should so greatly combat private judgment, self-will. To do so is to place oneself in a state of servitude which destroys all initiative and makes a person lose contact with the world, which one ought not to scorn, but to ameliorate. Holding this opinion, would one not lose sight of what all true spiritual men have meant by "self-will," or a will not conformed to the will of God?

In this objection formulated by Americanism and taken up again by Modernism,[2] the true is cleverly mingled with the false. Even the authority of St. Thomas is invoked, and the following principle of the great doctor is often repeated: "Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it." The movements of nature are not as inordinate, they say, as the author of *The Imitation* maintains; we must have the full development of nature under grace.

And as they lack the true spirit of faith, they designedly pervert the principle of St. Thomas which they invoke. He speaks of nature as such, in the philosophical sense of the word, of nature with its essential and also its good elements; of the work of God, and not of wounded, fallen nature, as it actually is in consequence of original sin and of our personal sins, more or less deformed by our often unconscious egoism, our covetousness, our pride. Likewise, St. Thomas speaks of the passions or emotions as such, and not as

1 John 12:24 f.
2 Cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* nos. 1967 if., 2104.

inordinate, when he says that they are forces to be utilized; but to utilize them one must mortify whatever is inordinate in them. Their inordinatcncss must not simply be veiled or moderated, but put to death.

All these equivocations were not long in manifesting their consequences. The tree is judged by its fruit. With too strong a desire to please the world, these Modernists, apostles of a new type, let themselves be converted by the world, instead of converting it.

They disregarded the consequences of original sin; to hear them, one would judge that man was born good, as the Pelagians, and later Jean Jacques Rousseau, declared.

They forgot the gravity of mortal sin as an offense against God; and they considered it merely an evil which harms man. Therefore they failed particularly to recognize the gravity of the intellectual sins: incredulity, presumption, pride. The most serious offense seemed to them to be abstention from social works; consequently the purely contemplative life was considered quite useless, or the lot of the incapable. God Himself willed to reply to this objection by the canonization of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and by the extraordinary radiation of that contemplative soul.

They also failed to recognize the infinite elevation of our supernatural end: God, the Author of grace. Instead of speaking of eternal life, of the beatific vision, they talked about a vague moral ideal tinted with religion, in which the radical opposition between heaven and hell disappeared.

Finally, they forgot that the great means taken by Christ to save the world was the cross.

By all its consequences, the new doctrine gave proof of its principle: practical naturalism, not the spirit of God but the spirit of nature, the negation of the supernatural, if not in theory, at least in the conduct of life. During the period of Modernism this negation was occasionally formulated by declaring that mortification does not belong to the essence of Christianity. But we reply: Is mortification anything else than penance, and is not penance necessary for the Christian? How could St. Paul have written: "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies"? [3]

Under another form, practical naturalism appeared among the

[3] See II Cor. 4:10.

quietists, especially at the time of Molinos, in the seventeenth century. This naturalism was not that of action, as it is in Americanism, but that of inaction. Molinos held that "to wish to act offends God, who wishes to be the only one to act in us." [4] By no longer acting, he said, the soul annihilates itself and returns to its principle; then God alone lives and reigns in it.[5] Practical naturalism is thus reached by a way contrary to that of Americanism, which exalts natural activity.

Molinos deduced from his principle that the soul should no longer produce acts of knowledge or of love of God,[6] nor should it think any more of heaven or of hell, nor any longer reflect on its acts or on its defects;[7] the examination of conscience was thus suppressed. Molinos added that the soul should no longer desire its own perfection or its salvation,[8] nor should it ask God for anything positive,[9] but it ought to abandon itself to Him so that He may work His divine will in it, without its cooperation. Finally, he said: "The soul no longer needs to offer positive resistance to temptations, of which it no longer has to take account;[10] the voluntary cross of mortification is a heavy and useless burden which one must get rid of." [11]

He recommended that in prayer one should remain in obscure faith, in a repose in which one forgets every distinct thought relating to the humanity of Christ, or even to the divine perfections or to the Blessed Trinity, and that one should remain in this repose without producing any act. "That," he said, "is acquired contemplation, in which one must remain all one's life if God does not raise the soul to infused contemplation." [12]

In reality the contemplation thus acquired by rhe cessation of every act was only a pious somnolence, far more somnolent than pious. Certain quietists did not deign to leave it even to kneel at the elevation during Mass. They remained seated in their would-be union with God, which they confounded with an august form of nothingness. Their state reminds one more of the nirvana of the

4 Denzinger, nos. 1221 f.
5 *Ibid.,* nos. 1224 f.
6 *Ibid.,* no. 1226.
7 *Ibid.,* nos. 1227-29, 1232.
8 *Ibid.,* no. 1233 f.
9 *Ibid.,* no. 1234.
10 *Ibid.,* no. 1257.
11 *Ibid.,* no. 1258.
12 *Ibid.,* no. 1243.

Buddhists than of the transforming and radiant union of the saints.

This shows that the acquired contemplation, which Molinos advised for all, was not an infused passivity, but one acquired at will by the cessation of every operation. He thus attributed to this would-be acquired contemplation what is true only of infused contemplation, and with one stroke of the pen he suppressed all asceticism and the practice of the virtues, considered by tradition as the true disposition for infused contemplation and intimate union with God. Moreover, he claimed that "the distinction between the three ways, purgative, illuminative, and unitive, is the greatest absurdity that has been expressed in mysticism, since," he says, "there is only one way for all, the interior way." [18]

This suppression of mortification led to the worst disorders. Molinos finally reached the point of declaring that the temptations of the devil are always useful, even when they lead to immodest acts; that it is not necessary then to make acts of the contrary virtues, but that one must resign oneself, for such weakness reveals our nothingness.[14] But Molinos, instead of thus reaching contempt of self by the recognition of our culpability, claimed to reach impeccability [15] and mystical death; strange impeccability, reconcilable with all disorders.[16]

This lamentable doctrine is, of course, a caricature of traditional mysticism, which is thus radically perverted in all its principles. And under the pretext of avoiding natural activity, which naturalism of action exalts, one falls here into the practical naturalism of sloth and inaction. Under another form, this doctrine amounted to the suppression of asceticism, of the exercise of the virtues, and of mortification.[11]

[13] *Ibid.,* no. 1246.

[14] *Ibid.,* nos. 1257-66.

[15] *Ibid.,* nos. 1275-86.

[16] Cf. Denzinger, no. 1268: "Hujusmodi violentiae (daemonis) sunt medium magis proportionatum ad annihilandam animam et ad eam ad veram transformationem et unionem perducendam"; no. 1268: "Melius est ea non confiteri; quia non sunt peccata, nec etiam venialia."

[17] On these aberrations of the quietists, see the work of Father Dudon, S.J., *Michel Molinos.* The author makes it clear that one of the principal errors of the Spanish quietists was to consider the prayer of quiet as acquired at will (by the suppression of acts), whereas in reality it is infused, as St. Teresa points out (fifth mansion). They thus simulated infused prayer before having received it, and they completely disfigured it by suppressing all asceticism.

The errors of the quietists show that there are two types of naturalism: the practical naturalism of those who have lost the interior life, and the quite different naturalism of those who have never found it.

At the opposite extreme from practical naturalism, there is occasionally the proud austerity of a false supematuralism, such as we find in Jansenism and, earlier, in different forms of fanaticism, such as that of the Montanists in the second century and of the flagellants in the twelfth century. All these sects lost sight of the spirit of Christian mortification, which is not a spirit of pride, but of love of God.

In the seventeenth century the Jansenists fell into a pessimism which is an alteration of the Christian doctrine of penance. Like the first Protestants, they exaggerated the results of original sin to the point of saying that man no longer has free will, the liberty of indifference, but only spontaneity, and that all the acts of infidels are sins.[18] They taught that "all his life long, a man must do penance for original sin." [19] As a result, they retained souls during a whole lifetime in the purgative way, and kept them away from Holy Communion, saying that we are not worthy of such a union with our Lord. According to their doctrine, only those should be admitted to Holy Communion who have a pure, unalloyed love of God.[20] They forgot that this very pure love of God is precisely the effect of Communion, when it is accompanied by a generous struggle against all that is inordinate in us. Jansenism never attained to deliverance and peace.[21]

Here as elsewhere, two opposing errors must be avoided: practical naturalism and proud austerity. The truth is to be found between these two extremes and above them as a summit. We can see it if we consider, on the one hand, the elevation of our last end and of charity, and, on the other hand, the gravity of mortal sin and of its consequences.

18 Cf. Denzinger, nos. 1094, 1291,1298.

19 *Ibid.,* no. 1309: "Homo debet agere tota vita poenitentiam pro peccato originali."

20 *Ibid.,* no. 1313: "Arcendi sunt a sacra communione, quibus nondum inest amor Dei purissimus et omnis mixtionis expers."

21 It has been said of Pascal that throughout his life he thought of sanctity without ever attaining it, because he remained in his own presence instead of in the presence of God.

Mortification According to the Gospel

To see the true spirit of Christian mortification, we must consider what our Lord says about it in the Gospel and how the saints understood it and lived it.

The Savior did not come upon earth to carry out a human work of philanthropy, but a divine work of charity.[1] He accomplished it by speaking more to men of their duties than of their rights, by telling them the necessity of dying completely to sin in order to receive an abundant new life, and He willed to show His love for them even to the point of dying on the cross to redeem them. The two aspects of death to sin and of higher life are always spoken of together, with a dominant note which is that of the love of God. Nothing like this appears in the errors mentioned above.

What does our Lord tell us about mortification? In St. Luke's Gospel we read: "He said to all: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life,[22] shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall save it.[23] For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself and cast away himself?" [24]

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus points out the necessity of mortification, that is, of the death to sin and its consequences, by insisting on the elevation of our supernatural end: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [25] "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." [20] Why? Because Christ brings us grace, which is a participation in the inner life of God, superior to the natural life of the angels, that He may lead us to union with God, since we are called to see God as He sees Himself and to love Him as He loves Himself. This is the meaning of the words: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." But this precept requires the mortification of all that

22 By wishing, first of all, to enjoy this world, by fleeing purifying suffering and duty, which at times are painful.

23 "For he that shall lose his life," by sacrificing it in the accomplishment of duty out of love for Me, "shall save it."

24 Luke 9:23-25.

25 Matt. 5:20.

1 *Ibid.,* 48.

is inordinate in us, of the inordinate movements of concupiscence, anger, hatred, pride, hypocrisy, and so on. These movements represent what is inordinate in the different passions. Our Lord is explicit on this point in the same Sermon on the Mount. Nowhere can we find a better statement of the interior and exterior mortification that the Christian must practice and also of the spirit of this mortification. To show this, it will suffice to recall some of the Savior's words.

The true Christian ought as far as possible to exclude from his heart all resentment, all animosity: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." [27] "Go first to be reconciled to thy brother"; we must see in him not only an adversary, but a brother, a son of God. Blessed are the meek. One day a young Israelite, who knew the Our Father, received the inspiration to pardon his greatest enemy; he did so, and immediately received the grace to believe in the entire Gospel and the Church.

Christ preaches also the mortification of concupiscence, of the evil gaze, of evil desire, by which one would already commit adultery in his heart: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee . . . ; if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off . . . ; for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell." [28] Our Lord could not express Himself in a more energetic manner. This explains why, for the conquering of certain temptations, the saints advise recourse to fasts, vigils, and other bodily austerities, which, when practiced with discretion, obedience, and generosity, keep the body in subjection and assure liberty of spirit.[29]

The Sermon on the Mount also speaks of the mortification of every inordinate desire of vengeance: "You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil." [30] Do not reply to an insult with acrimony in order to avenge yourself. Unquestionably you must resist even to death

27 *Ibid.,* 23 f.
28 *Ibid.,* 29 f.
28 St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 147 (Of fasting).
80 Matt. 5:38 f.

him who would lead you to evil; but bear offenses patiently, without hatred or irritation. "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him": 31 that is to say, be ready to bear injustice with longanimity. This is the patience that breaks the anger of an adversary and sometimes converts him, as can be seen in the three centuries of persecution which the early Church had to endure. The Christian ought to be less preoccupied with jealously defending his temporal rights than with winning over to God the soul of his irritated brother. Here we see the height of Christian justice, which ought always to be united to charity. The perfect are here admonished that it is not fitting for them to enter into litigation, unless for the sake of higher interests of which they have charge.32

In the same chapter, the Savior asks us to mortify egoism, self-love, which inclines us to flee from him who wishes to ask us for a service,33 to mortify rash judgment,34 spiritual pride, and hypocrisy, which incline men to perform good works or to pray before men "to be seen by them." 35

Finally, Christ points out to us what the spirit of mortification ought to be: death to sin and its consequences out of love for God. Our Lord's manner of stating His doctrine is most amiable, as opposed to the proud austerity of the Jansenists. In St. Matthew's Gospel, He tells us: "When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee." 30 As the fathers have understood this text, Christ would have us perfume our heads with the oil of charity, mercy, and spiritual joy: wash our faces, that is, purify our souls of all spirit of ostentation. When we accomplish these acts of piety, it is not forbidden us to be seen, but to wish to be seen, for we would thus lose purity of intention, which ought to

•l *Ibid.,* 39 f.
82 Cf. St. Thomas, *In Matth.,* 3:40.
88 Matt. 5:4: f.
84 *Ibid.,* 7:1.
88 *Ibid.,* 6:1-19.
·· *Ibid.,* 16-18.

be directed immediately to the Father present in the secret of our souls.

Such is the spirit of Christian mortification or austerity, which the Jansenists did not understand; it is the spirit of love of God and love of neighbor. It is the spirit of love that radiates on souls to save them; therefore it is the spirit of gentleness, for how can we be meek, even with those who are ill-tempered, without learning to conquer ourselves, to possess our souls? It is a spirit which leads us to offer to God all painful occurrences, so that even these things may help us to advance toward Him and to save souls, and that all, even the obstacles that we encounter, may cooperate unto good, as Jesus made His cross the great means of salvation.

With this idea in mind, we see that, by this spirit of love of God, Christian mortification rises like a summit above the effeminacy of practical naturalism and above harsh and proud austerity. This is the mortification we find in the saints who are stamped with the image of Jesus crucified, whether saints of the early Church, like the first martyrs, or those of the Middle Ages, like St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, or those of more recent times, like St. Benedict Joseph Labre, the Curé of Ars, or those more recently canonized, such as St. John Bosco and St. Joseph Cotolengo. *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.*

CHAPTER XX

Mortification According to St. Paul and the Reasons for Its Necessity

THE doctrine of the Gospel on the necessity of mortification is explained at considerable length by St. Paul in his epistles. Frequent quotation is made of his words: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." [1] Likewise he says to the Galatians: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." [2]

Not only does St. Paul affirm the necessity of mortification, but he gives reasons for it which may be reduced to four; they are precisely those which are disregarded by practical naturalism. The mortification of all that is inordinate in us is necessary: (1) because of the consequences of original sin; (2) because of the results of our personal sins; (3) because of the infinite elevation of our supernatural end; (4) because we must imitate our crucified Lord.

Considering these different motives, we shall see what interior and exterior mortification is for St. Paul. It is attached to many of the virtues, since each one excludes the contrary vices, and particularly to the virtue of penance, which ought to be inspired by love of God, and which has for its end the destruction in us of the consequences of sin as an offense against God.[3]*

1 See 1 Cor. 9:27.

2 Gal. 5:24 f.

[3] St. Thomas, in IIIa, q.85, a. 2 f., says that penance is a special virtue which labors to efface sin and its consequences, inasmuch as sin is an offense against God. Wherefore penance is a part of justice, and, inspired by charity, it

The Consequences of Original Sin

First of all, St. Paul draws a parallel between Christ the Author of our salvation and Adam the author of our ruin, and notes the consequences of original sin. To the Romans he says: "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death." [4] And again: "By the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners. . . . Where sin abounded, grace did more abound . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord." [5]

With infirmities and maladies, death is one of the results of original sin, but there is also concupiscence, of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit." [6]

According to the Apostle, this is the condition of the "old man," that is, of man such as he is born of Adam, with a fallen and wounded nature. We read in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "You have heard Him, and have been taught in Him . . . to put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth." [7] St. Paul writes in the same vein to the Colossians: "Lie not one to another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him." [8]

Again, he writes to the Romans: "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating

commands other subordinate virtues, in particular temperance, as exemplified in fasting, abstinence, vigils.

A distinction may be made between mortification, properly so called, which depends on the virtue of penance, and mortification in the broad sense, which depends on each virtue, inasmuch as each one rejects the vices that are contrary to it. Correctly speaking, we cannot repent of original sin, but we should labor to diminish those of its results which incline us to personal sin.

[4] Rom. 5:12.
[5] *Ibid.,* 19-21.
[6] Gal. 5:16 f.
[7] Eph. 4:21-24.
[8] Col. 3:9 f.

me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [8]

The old man, such as he is born of Adam, has a certain lack of balance in his wounded nature. This will be evident if we recall the nature of original justice. In it there was perfect harmony between God and the soul, made to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him; and also between the soul and the body. In fact, as long as the soul was subject to God, the passions or sensible emotions were obedient to right reason enlightened by faith, and to the will vivified by charity. The body itself shared this harmony by privilege, in the sense that it was not subject to sickness or death.

Original sin destroyed this harmony. The first man, by his sin, as the Council of Trent says, "lost for himself and for us sanctity and original justice," [9] and transmitted to us a fallen nature, deprived of grace and wounded. Without falling into the exaggerations of the Jansenists, we must admit, with St. Thomas, that we are born with our will turned away from God, inclined to evil, weak in regard to the good,[11] with our reason prone to error,[12] our sensitive appetites strongly disposed to inordinate pleasure and to anger, source of every type of injustice.[13] Whence come pride, forgetful-

8 Rom. 7:22-24. The meaning is: who will deliver me from the law of sin which is in my members, and consequently from spiritual or eternal death. As has often been pointed out, the idea of deliverance by physical death is foreign to the context.

10 Council of Trent (Denzinger, no. 789): "Adam acceptam a Deo sanctitatem et justitiam non sibi soli sed etiam nobis perdidit."

11 St. Thomas, Ia Ilae, q.83, a.3: "Two things must be considered in the infection of original sin. First, its inherence to its subject; and in this respect it regards first the essence of the soul. . . . In the second place, we must consider its inclination to act; and in this way it regards the powers of the soul. It must therefore regard first of all that power in which is seated the first inclination to commit a sin, and this is the will." la Ilae, q.85, a.3: "In so far as the will is deprived of its order to the good, there is the wound of malice." *Ibid.,* ad zum: "Malice is not to be taken here as a sin, but as a certain proneness of the will to evil, according to Gen. 8:21: 'Man's senses are prone to evil from his youth.'" (Vulg.: The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth.)

12 *Ibid.:* "Hence, in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance."

13 *Ibid.:* "In so far as the irascible (appetite) is deprived of its order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible (appetite) is deprived of its order to rhe delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence. Accordingly, these are the four wounds inflicted on the whole of human nature as a result of our first parent's sin."

ness of God, egoism under all its forms, often a gross almost unconscious egoism, which wishes at any cost to find happiness on earth without aspiring any higher. In this sense, we can truly say with the author of *The Imitation:* "Nature proposes self as her end, but grace does all things purely out of love for God." [14] St. Thomas speaks in the same way: "Inordinate love of self is the cause of every sin." [55]

The fathers, in particular Venerable Bede, state in their explanation of the parable of the Good Samaritan that fallen man is not only stripped of grace and of the privileges of the state of original justice, but is even wounded in his nature. "By the sin of the first 'parent, man was despoiled of grace and wounded in nature." This is explained especially by the fact that we are born with our will turned away from God, directly averted from our supernatural last end, and indirectly from our natural last end; for every sin against the supernatural law is indirectly contrary to the natural law which obliges us to obey whatever God may command.[16]

This disorder and weakness of the will in fallen man are shown by the fact that we cannot, without healing grace, love God, the Author of our nature, efficaciously and more than ourselves.[17] There is also the disorder of concupiscence, which is visible enough for St. Thomas to see in it "a quite probable sign of original sin," a sign which adds its confirmation to what revelation says about the sin of

[14] *The Imitation,* Bk. Ill, chap. 54.

[15] See la Ilae, q.77, a.4: "Inordinate love of self is the cause of every sin." We explained elsewhere at greater length the Thomistic doctrine of the consequences of original sin in relation to the spiritual life. Cf. *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* I, 292 ff.

[16] If man had been created in a purely natural state (or of pure nature), he would be bom with a will not turned away from God, but capable of turning freely toward Him (Author of our nature and of the natural moral law) or of turning away from Him. There is, therefore, a notable difference between this state and that in which man is actually born. As a result of original sin, our powers to observe the natural moral law are less than they would have been in a state of pure nature. This is why, without the aid of healing grace, we cannot succeed in efficaciously loving God, the Author of our nature, more than ourselves.

[17] St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 109, a. 3: "In the state of corrupt nature man falls short of this (of the efficacious love of God, the Author of nature) in the appetite of his rational will, which, unless it is cured by God's grace, follows its private good, on account of the corruption of nature." See also, *De malo,* q.4, a.2; q.j, a.2; *De veritate,* q.24, a. 12 ad 2um.

the first man.[18] In place of the original triple harmony (between God and the soul, between the soul and the body, between the body and exterior things), appears the triple disorder which St. John speaks of when he writes: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world." [19]

Undoubtedly baptism cleanses us from original sin by applying Christ's merits to us, by giving us sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. Thus, by the virtue of faith our reason is supernaturally enlightened, and by the virtues of hope and charity our will is turned to God. We also receive the infused virtues which rectify the sensible appetites. However, there remains in the baptized who continue in the state of grace an original weakness, wounds in the process of healing, which sometimes cause us to suffer, and which are left to us, says St. Thomas, as an occasion for struggle and merit.[20]

This is what St. Paul says to the Romans: "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end

[18] St. Thomas, *Contra Gentes,* Bk. IV, chap. 42, no. 3: "Considering divine providence and the dignity of the superior part of human nature, it can with sufficient probability be proved that defects of this kind are penalties; and thus it can be concluded that the human race is somewhat infected by original sin."

[18] See I John 2:16.

[20] Cf. Illa, q.69, a.3 ad 3um: "Original sin spread in this way, that at first the person infected the nature, and afterward the nature infected the person. Whereas Christ in reverse order at first repairs what regards the person, and afterward will simultaneously repair what pertains to the nature in all men. Consequently, by baptism He takes away from man forthwith the guilt of original sin and the punishment of being deprived of the heavenly vision. But the penalties of the present life, such as death, hunger, thirst, and the like, pertain to the nature, from the principles of which they arise, inasmuch as it is deprived of original justice. Therefore these defects will not be taken away until the ultimate restoration of nature through the glorious resurrection."

Ibid., in corp. a. 3: "Wherefore a Christian receives grace in baptism, as to his soul; but he retains a passible body, so that he may suffer for Christ therein (Rom. 7:11, 17). . . . Secondly, this is suitable for our spiritual training: namely, in order that, by fighting against concupiscence and other defects to which he is subject, man may receive the crown of victory" (Rom. 6:6).

The Council of Trent (Denzinger, no. 792) says that baptism remits original sin perfectly by giving us habitual grace and the infused virtues, but that in the baptized the "coal of concupiscence" remains, which is left *ad agonen/* (for the struggle) and which cannot harm those who do not consent to it and who struggle manfully by the grace of Christ.

that we may serve sin no longer. . . . Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." [21] Not only must this "old man" be moderated, regulated; he must be mortified or made to die. Otherwise we shall never succeed in obtaining the mastery over our passions and we shall remain more or less their slaves. This will mean opposition, perpetual struggle between nature and grace. If unmortified souls do not perceive this struggle, it is because grace is scarcely alive in them; egoistic nature has free play, with some virtues of temperament, natural happy inclinations that are judged to be true virtues.

Mortification is, therefore, imposed upon us because of the consequences of original sin, which remain even in the baptized as an occasion of struggle, and of struggle indispensable in order not to fall into actual and personal sin. We do not repent of original sin, which is a "sin of nature," which was voluntary only in the first man; but we must labor to rid ourselves of the withering effects of original sin, in particular concupiscence, which inclines us to sin. By so doing, the wounds of which we spoke above are healed more and more with the increase of the grace which heals and which, at the same time, raises us up to a new life *(gratia sanans et elevans').* Far from destroying nature by the practice of mortification, grace restores it, heals it, and renders it increasingly pliable or docile in the hands of God.

The Consequences of Our Personal Sins

A second motive that renders mortification necessary is found in the consequences of our personal sins. St. Paul insists on this point in the Epistle to the Galatians, by noting especially the effects of sins against charity: "By charity of the spirit serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed you be not consumed one of another. I say then, walk in the spirit (that is, the spirit of the new man enlightened and fortified by the Holy Spirit),[22] and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, conten-

21 Rom. 6:6, u.
22 *Ibid.,* 8:4 f.

tions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. . . . They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences." [23]

Mortification is clearly imposed on us by reason of the effects of our personal sins. Renewed actual sin engenders a habitual bad disposition which, when grave, is called a vice or at least a defect. These defects are habitual modes of seeing, judging, willing, and acting, which combine to form an imperfect mentality, a spirit which is not that of God. And sometimes they translate themselves to our exterior, so much so that someone has rightly said that at thirty or forty years of age every man is responsible for his own countenance, according as it expresses pride, self-sufficiency, presumption, contempt, or disillusionment. These defects become traits of character, and little by little God's image is effaced in us.

When sins are confessed with contrition or sufficient attrition, absolution obliterates sin, but it leaves certain dispositions, called the remnants of sin, *reliquiae peccati,*[24] which are, as it were, imprinted in us, like a furrow in our faculties, in our character and temperament. Thus the seat of covetousness remains after baptism. It is certain, for example, that although a man who has fallen into the vice of drunkenness and who accuses himself of it with sufficient attrition receives together with pardon sanctifying grace and the infused virtue of temperance, he preserves an inclination to this vice, and, unless he flees from the occasions, he will fall again. This trying inclination must not only be moderated, it must be mortified, made to die in order to unfetter both nature and grace.

The same is true of our unreasonable antipathies. They must be not merely veiled, not only moderated, but mortified, because they are seeds of death. That from this point of view an idea may be formed of the necessity of mortification, we must bear in mind the numerous vices that are born of each of the seven capital sins. For example, from envy are born hatred, slander, calumny, joy at the misfortune of another, and sadness at his success. From anger, which is opposed to meekess, come disputes, fits of passion, insults, abusive words, and at times blasphemy. From vainglory spring disobedience,

33 Gal. 5:13–24.
34 Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, q.86, a. j.

boasting, hypocrisy, contention through rivalry, discord, love of novelties, and stubbornness. St. Thomas lays emphasis on each of these vices which spring from the capital sins[25][27] and which are sometimes more grave than they. The field of mortification is consequently very wide.

Finally in a spirit of penance, we must mortify ourselves to expiate past sin that has already been forgiven and to help us avoid sin in the future. The virtue of penance leads us, in fact, not only to hatred of sin as an offense against God, but still more to reparation. For this last, to stop sinning is not sufficient; a satisfaction must be offered to divine justice, for every sin merits a punishment, as every act inspired by charity merits a reward.[20] Consequently, when sacramental absolution, which remits sin, is given to us, a penance or satisfaction is imposed upon us that we may thus obtain the remission of the temporal punishment, which ordinarily remains to be undergone. This satisfaction is a part of the sacrament of penance which applies the Savior's merits to us; and as such, it contributes to our restoration to grace and to its increase in us.[27]

Thus is paid, at least in part, the debt contracted by the sinner in regard to divine justice. To this end, man must also bear patiently the sufferings of this life, and if this patient endurance does not suffice to purify him completely, he must pass through purgatory, for nothing defiled can enter heaven. The dogma of purgatory thus strongly confirms the necessity of mortification, because it shows us that we must pay our debt, either in this life while meriting, or after death without meriting.

A repentance full of love effaces both the sin and the punishment, as did those blessed tears on which Christ bestowed His benediction, saying: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."[28]

It is important to accuse ourselves especially of sins that are becoming habitual and most hinder our union with God. This is more important than to aim at a complete enumeration of venial sins.

Since penance is necessary to every Christian, how can the neces-

25 Cf. la Ilae, q. 77, a.4 f.; q. 84, a.4.
20 See Illa, q.8$, a. 3; la Ilae, q.87, a. 1, j–j.
27 Cf. Illa, q.86, a.4 ad iuni; Suppl., q. 10, a.z ad mm.
28 Luke 7:47.

sity of mortification be denied? Such a denial would be an utter disregard of the gravity of sin and its consequences. He who is opposed to mortification comes little by little to drink of iniquity as if it were water; he reaches the point where he calls what is often truly venial sin, an imperfection, and what is a mortal sin, a human weakness. Let us remember that Christian temperance differs specifically from acquired temperance, and that it exacts a mortification unknown to the pagan philosophers.[29]

Neither ought we to forget that we have to contend against the spirit of the world and against the devil, according to St. Paul's words to the Ephesians: "Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." [30]

To resist the enemy's temptation, which leads first of all to light faults and then to graver ones, Christ Himself told us that we must have recourse to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.[31] And then the temptation will become the occasion of meritorious acts of faith, confidence in God, and love of God. We shall find ourselves in the happy necessity of being unable to rest content with imperfect acts of virtue *(actus reimssï)*; we shall have to resort to more intense and more meritorious acts.

29 Cf. la Ilae, q.63, a.4: "In the consumption of food, the proper measure is fixed by human reason so that it should not harm the health of the body, and should not hinder the use of reason: whereas, according to the divine rule, it behoves man to chastise his body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27) by abstinence in the matter of food and drink and the like. . . . Those infused moral virtues, whereby men behave well in respect of their being fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household (Douay, domestics) of God (Eph. 2:19), differ from the acquired virtues, whereby man behaves well in respect of human affairs."

30 Eph. 6:11 f., 14 f.

31 Matt. 17:20: "But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, suppl., q. 15, a. 3.

The Infinite Elevation of Our Supernatural End Demands a Special Mortification or Abnegation

We saw in the preceding chapter that in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord demands the mortification of the slightest inordinate interior movements of anger, sensuality, and pride, because we ought, He says, to be "perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect," [32] since we have received a participation in His intimate life, and since we are called to see Him immediately as He sees Himself, and to love Him as He loves Himself.

From the fact that we are called to a supernatural end of infinite elevation, since it is God Himself in His intimate life, it is not sufficient for us to live according to right reason, subordinating our passions to it. We must always act not only as rational beings, but as children of God, in whom reason is subordinate to faith, and every action is inspired by charity. This obliges us to detachment in regard to all that belongs only to the earth, or is purely natural, in regard to all that cannot be a means of drawing nearer to God and of leading souls to Him. In this sense we must combat the different forms of natural eagerness, which would absorb our activity to the detriment of the life of grace.

In virtue of this principle, St. Paul says to us: "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ (by baptism), seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, . . . evil concupiscence, and covetousness, . . . anger, indignation." [33]

Likewise he writes to the Ephesians: "For by Him we have access both in one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone: in whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit." [34]

[32] Matt. 5:48.
[33] Col. 3:1-3,5,8.
[34] Eph. 2:18–22.

Therefore, even if a person does not bind himself to the effective practice of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, he must have the spirit of the counsels, that is, the spirit of detachment: "The time is short (for the journey toward eternity). It remaineth, that they also who have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not. For the fashion of this world passeth away." [35] A man must not try to settle down in this world if he truly wishes to make progress toward God, if he wishes to make profitable use of time to advance toward eternity. The infinite loftiness of our supernatural end demands a special abnegation in regard to whatever is simply human, even though legitimate, for we might become absorbed in it to the detriment of the life of grace.

This is particularly true for apostles: "No man, being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses; that he may please Him to whom he hath engaged himself." [36] Likewise, the soldier of Christ ought to avoid becoming entangled in the things of the world; he should use them as though not using them; otherwise he would become as "a tinkling cymbal," and would lose the spirit of Christ. He would be like salt that has lost its savor "and is good for nothing anymore but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men."

Nothing is more certain. From all that is purely of this earth the Christian ought to have a detachment, a special abnegation which is demanded by the infinite loftiness of the eternal goal toward which he ought to advance every day with greater rapidity; for the nearer we approach to God, the more we are drawn by Him.

The Neccessity of Imitating Jesus Crucified

A fourth reason obliging us to mortification or abnegation is the necessity of imitating Jesus crucified. He Himself tells us: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." [37] St. Paul adds: "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . And if sons, heirs also; heirs

[35] See I Cor. 7:29-31.
[36] See II Tim. 2:4.
[37] Luke 9:23; 14:27; Matt. 9:38; Mark 8:34.

indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." [38]

Evidently this spirit of detachment is so much the more imposed on us as we are called to a higher, more abundant, and more radiating interior life, in which we ought to follow more closely the example of Christ, who came, not as a philosopher or a sociologist, but as the Savior, and who out of love willed to die on the cross in order to redeem us. He came to accomplish, not a human work of philanthropy but a divine work of charity, even to complete sacrifice, which is the great proof of love. Without a doubt this is what St. Paul means.

The Apostle of the Gentiles completely lived what he taught. Consequently, while describing his life of hardship and suffering, he could write: "But we have this treasure (the light of life of the gospel) in earthen vessels, that the excellency (of the gospel) may be of the power of God and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken (by God); we are cast down, but we perish not: always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies. . . . So then death worketh in us, but life in you." [39]

In his commentary on II Cor. 4:7, St. Thomas says: "If the apostles were rich, powerful, noble according to the flesh, everything great that they accomplished would be attributed to them and not to God. But because they were poor and despised, what was sublime in their ministry is attributed to God. This explains why our Lord willed that they should be exposed to tribulations and to contempt. . . . And because they trusted in God and hoped in Jesus Christ, they were not crushed. . . . They bore affliction and the dangers of death patiently that they might thus attain to the life of glory as the Savior did: 'Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.' "

St. Paul says further: "For I think that God hath set forth us

[38] Rom. 8:14, 17 f.
[39] Cf. II Cor. 4:7-10, ii.

apostles, the last. . . . We are reviled; and we bless. We are persecuted; and we suffer it. We are blasphemed; and we entreat. We are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all, even until now." [40] St. Paul here describes the life of the apostles from Pentecost until their martyrdom. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles that, after they had been scourged, "they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." [41] They truly carried their cross and were thus stamped in the image of Christ that they might continue the work of the redemption by the same means as the Savior Himself had employed.

This spirit of detachment through imitation of Jesus crucified was singularly striking during the first three centuries of persecution which followed the founding of the Church. The letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch and the acts of the martyrs make this clear.

This same spirit of detachment and of configuration to Christ is found in all the saints, both ancient and modern: in St. Benedict, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and, nearer our day, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, the Curé of Ars, and, among the most recently canonized, St. John Bosco, and St. Joseph Cotolengo.

The spirit of detachment, of abnegation, is the condition of a close union with God, whence supernatural life overflows in a manner ever new, and at times stupendous, for the eternal welfare of souls. This is evidenced by the lives of all the saints without exception, and we ought to nourish our souls daily with the examples of these great servants of God. The world is not so much in need of philosophers and sociologists, as of saints who are the living image of the Savior among us.

According to St. Paul, the following reasons show the necessity of mortification or abnegation: (1) the consequences of original sin which incline us to evil; (2) the results of our personal sins; (3) the infinite loftiness of our supernatural end; (4) the necessity of imitating Jesus crucified. These are precisely the four motives disregarded by practical naturalism which reappeared some years ago in Americanism and Modernism.

These four motives of mortification can be reduced to two: hatred

40 Cf. I Cor. 4:9, nf.
41 Acts 5:41.

of sin and love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the spirit of holy realism, and basically of Christian optimism, which ought to inspire exterior and interior mortification. These remain to be treated more in detail. The true answer to practical naturalism is the love of Jesus crucified, which leads us to resemble Him and to save souls with Him by the same means as He used.

Mortification or abnegation thus understood, far from destroying nature, liberates it, restores it, heals it. It opens up to us the profound meaning of the maxim: To serve God, is to reign: that is, to reign over our passions, over the spirit of the world, its false principles and its example, over the devil and his perversity; to reign with God by sharing increasingly in His intimate life, in virtue of this great law, namely, that if life does not descend, it ascends.

Man cannot live without love, and if he renounces every inferior love which leads to death, he opens his soul ever wider to the love of God and of souls in God. The Savior Himself declares: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" for the eternal good of souls.

CHAPTER XXI

Sins to be Avoided
Their Roots and Their Consequences

WE HAVE treated in general of the necessity of mortification and abnegation because of the consequences both of original sin and of our personal sins, and also because of the infinite elevation of our supernatural end and the necessity of imitating Jesus crucified. We shall consider somewhat in detail the principal sins to be avoided, their roots, and their consequences. St. Thomas does so in treating of the seven capital sins.[1] With the aid of his work, we can make a serious and profound examination of conscience, especially if we ask for the light of the Holy Spirit, in order to see from above the stains on our souls, a little as the Lord Himself sees them. The gifts of knowledge and counsel can here greatly fill out what Christian prudence tells us; with it an increasingly enlightened, upright, and certain conscience will be developed in us.

We shall consider, first of all, the roots of the capital sins; then we will speak of their consequences.

The Roots of the Capital Sins

As shown by St. Gregory the Great[2] and, following him in a more profound manner, also by St. Thomas,[3] the capital sins of pride,[4] sloth,[5] envy, anger, avarice, gluttony, and luxury are not the gravest sins of all; they are less grave than heresy, apostasy, despair,

[1] Cf. la Ilae, q.77, a.4 f.; q.84, a.4.
[2] *Moral.,* Bk. XXXI, chap. 17.
[3] See la Ilae, q.77, a.4 f.; q.84, a.4.
[4] For St. Gregory and Sr. Thomas, vainglory is the first of the capital sins.
[5] St. Gregory and St. Thomas use the term, *acedia,* that is, evil sadness which embitters.

and hatred of God. But the capital sins are those toward which we are first of all inclined, and which lead to a separation from God and to still graver sins. Man does not reach complete perversity all of a sudden; he is led to it progressively, by a gradual descent to evil.

In the first place we must examine the root of the seven capital sins. As St. Thomas says, they all spring from inordinate self-love or egoism, which hinders us from loving God above all else and inclines us to turn away from Him. St. Augustine says: "Two loves built two cities: the love of self even to contempt of God built the city of Babylon, that is, that of the world and of immorality; the love of God even to contempt of self built the city of God." [6]

Evidently we sin, that is, we turn away from God or become estranged from Him, only because we desire and will to have a created good in a manner not conformable to the divine law.[7] This comes about only by reason of an inordinate love of ourselves, which is thus the source of every sin. This inordinate self-love or egoism must not only be moderated, but mortified so that an ordered love of self may prevail in us. This love is the secondary act of charity, by which the just man loves himself for God in order to glorify God in time and eternity. Whereas the sinner in the state of mortal sin loves himself above all else and in practice prefers himself to God, the just man loves God more than himself and must, in addition, love himself in God and for God. He must love his body that it may serve the soul instead of being an obstacle to its higher life; he must love his soul that it may live eternally with divine life. He must love his intellect and will that they may live increasingly by the light and love of God. Such is manifestly the broad meaning of the mortification of self-love, of self-will, which is opposed to that of God. Life must be prevented from descending, so that it may rise toward Him who is the source of every good and of all beatitude. Nothing is clearer.

Inordinate self-love leads us to death, according to the Savior's words: "He that loveth his life (in an egotistical manner) shall lose it; and he that hateth (or sacrifices) his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal." [8] In the saints this love of God reaches even

[6] *The City of God,* Bk. XIV, chap. 28.
[7] Cf. St. Thomas, *loc. cit.*
[8] John 12:25.

to contempt of self, that is, even to real and effective contempt of all that is inordinate in us.

From inordinate self-love, the root of every sin, spring the three concupiscences which St. John speaks of, when he says: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world." [9] These are, in fact, the three great manifestations of the spirit of the world in regard to the goods of the body, to exterior goods, and to the goods of the spirit. One is thus led to confound apparent good and real good in these three orders.[10]

St. Thomas observes that the sins of the flesh are more shameful than those of the spirit, for they lower man to the level of the brute; but those of the spirit, such as pride, the only ones that exist in the devil, are more grave for they are more directly opposed to God and turn us more away from Him.[11]

The concupiscence of the flesh is the inordinate desire of what is, or seems to be, useful to the preservation of the individual and of the species; from this inordinate or sensual love arise gluttony and lust. Voluptuousness can thus become an idol and blind us more and more.

The concupiscence of the eyes is the inordinate desire of all that can please the sight: of luxury, wealth, money which makes it possible for us to procure worldly goods. From it is bom avarice. The avaricious man ends by making his hidden treasure his god, adoring it, and sacrificing everything to it: his time, his strength, his family, and sometimes his eternity.

The pride of life is the inordinate love of our own excellence, of all that can emphasize it, no matter how hard or difficult that may be. Fie who yields more and more to pride ends by becoming his own god, as Lucifer did. From this vice all sin and perdition may spring; whence the importance of humility, a fundamental virtue, just as pride is the source of every sin.

9 Cf. I John 2:16.

10 See la Ilae, q. 77, a. 5.

11 *Ibid.,* q.73, a.5: "Spiritual sins are of greater guilt than carnal sins. . . . Spiritual sin denotes more a turning from something. . . . Sins of intemperance are most worthy of reproach . . . because by these sins man is, so to speak, brutalized."

According to St. Gregory and St. Thomas,[12] pride or arrogance is more than a capital sin; it is the root from which proceed especially four capital sins: vanity or vainglory, spiritual sloth or wicked sadness which embitters, envy, and anger. Vanity is the inordinate love of praise and honors. Spiritual sloth saddens the soul at the thought of the labor involved in sanctification, and at the thought of the spiritual good of good works because of the effort and abnegation they require. Envy inclines us to grow sad over another's good, in so far as it appears to oppose our own excellence. Anger, when it is not just indignation but a sin, is an inordinate movement of the soul which inclines us to repulse violently what displeases us; from it arise quarrels, insults, and abusive words. These capital vices, especially spiritual sloth, envy, and anger, engender a wicked sadness that weighs down the soul; they are quite the opposite of spiritual peace and joy, which are the fruits of charity.

All these seeds of death must not only be moderated, but mortified. The original seed is self-love, from which proceed the three concupiscences; and from them, the seven capital sins. This is what made St. Paul say: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." [13]

We see this mortification in the lives of the saints, where grace finally dominates all the inclinations of fallen nature in order to restore our nature, to heal it, and to communicate a higher life to it. This is clear for the Christian mind, and the generous practice of such mortification prepares the soul for the more profound purifications that God Himself sends in order to destroy completely the seeds of death that still subsist in our sensible appetites and higher faculties.

It is not enough, however, to consider the roots of the seven capital sins; we must examine their consequences.

The Consequences of the Seven Capital Sins

By the consequences of sin are generally understood the remnants of sin *(reliquiae peccati),* the evil inclinations left, so to speak, in our temperament even after sin has been forgiven, as concupiscence,

[12] Cf. *ibid.,* q.84, a.4.
[13] Rom. 8:13. Cf. Col. 3:5.

which is a remnant of original sin, remains after baptism, Eke a wound in the course of healing. The consequences of the capital sins may also mean the other sins that spring from them. The capital sins are so called because they are like the head or the principle of many others. We are, first of all, inclined toward them, and by them in turn toward sins that are often more serious.

Thus vainglory or vanity engenders disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, contention through rivalry, discord, love of novelties, and stubbornness. It is a vice that may lead to most lamentable falls and apostasy.

Spiritual sloth, disgust for spiritual things and for the work of sanctification, because of the effort it demands, is a vice directly opposed to the love of God and to the holy joy that results from it. Sloth engenders malice, rancor or bitterness toward our neighbor, pusillanimity in the face of duty to be accomplished, discouragement, spiritual torpor, forgetfulness of the precepts, seeking after forbidden things. Slipping downward on the slope of pride, vainglory, and spiritual sloth, many have lost their vocation.

In the same way, envy or willful displeasure at the sight of another's good, as if it were an evil for us, engenders hatred, slander, calumny, joy at the misfortune of another, and sadness at his success.

Gluttony and sensuality also produce other vices and may lead to blindness of spirit, to hardness of heart, to attachment to the present life even to the loss of hope of eternal life, and to love of self even to hatred of God, and to final impenitence.

The capital sins are often mortal; they are venial only when the matter is light or the consent not complete. They may exist under a very gross form, as happens in many souls in the state of mortal sin; but they may also exist, as St. John of the Cross points out,[14] in souls in the state of grace, as so many departures from the course of the spiritual life. It is thus that spiritual pride, spiritual gluttony, spiritual sensuality, and spiritual sloth are spoken of. Spiritual pride induces us, for example, to flee from those who reproach us, even when they have the authority to do so and are acting justly; it may even induce us to hold a certain rancor against them. As for spiritual gluttony, it may make us desire sensible consolations in piety, to the point of seeking ourselves in it more than we seek God. With spiritual pride, it is the origin of false mysticism.

[14] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chaps. 2-8.

Happily, contrary to what is true of the virtues, these vices or defects are not connected. One may have some without the others; several indeed are contradictory: for example, one cannot be avaricious and prodigal at one and the same time.

But we have to practice numerous virtues, forty or more, if we count all the virtues annexed to the principal ones. With the exception of justice, each stands like a summit between two contrary vices: the one by excess, such as temerity; the other by defect, such as cowardice.

Moreover, certain defects resemble certain virtues: for instance, pride is in some ways similar to magnanimity. It is important to have discretion or Christian prudence to discern clearly the virtue from the defect which in certain respects resembles it. Otherwise, false notes may be struck on the keyboard of the virtues: for example, pusillanimity may be confounded with humility, severity with justice, weakness with mercy.

The Examination of Conscience

The enumeration of all these ignoble fruits of inordinate self-love should induce us to make a serious examination of conscience. Moreover, their number shows us that the field of mortification is very wide if we wish to live the true life in a thoroughgoing way. The quietists declared the examination of conscience useless, because, they said, the human heart is inscrutable. They even asserted that such examination was harmful, as all reflection on self would hinder us from thinking of God in naked faith.[15]

Such statements are aberrations easily refuted. Precisely because it is difficult to know the true nature of our interior feelings, we must examine them closely. And this examination, far from turning us away from the thought of God, should keep bringing us back to it. Moreover, we must ask for divine light to see our soul a little as God Himself sees it, to see our day or the week that has just ended somewhat as it is written in the book of life, somewhat as we shall see it at the last judgment. Thus to see ourselves, we ought every evening to search out with humility and contrition the faults that we have committed in thought, word, deed, and omission.

On the other hand, in this examination we should avoid the excess

[18] Cf. Denzinger, nos. 1230 f.

opposed to that of the quietists, that is to say, the minute search for the slightest faults under their purely material aspect, a search which sometimes leads to scruples or to forgetfulness of important things. The examination of conscience aims less at a complete enumeration of venial faults than at seeing and sincerely acknowledging the principle which in our case is generally at their root. To cure a skin eruption, an effort is made to purify the blood rather than to treat each blemish separately. In short, in the examination of conscience the soul ought not to spend too much time in consideration of self and cease to turn its gaze toward God. On the contrary, looking fixedly at God, it should ask itself how the Lord Himself will judge its day, or the week just spent. In what has it been entirely His? In what entirely its own? In what has it sought God sincerely? In what has it sought itself? Then, calmly the soul judges itself as it were from on high, in the light of God, somewhat as it will be judged on the last day. From this consideration we can understand the nobility of the Christian conscience and the holy demands it makes; it is far superior to the conscience of a simple philosopher.

But, as St. Catherine of Siena says in speaking of these holy exactions of conscience, we should not separate the consideration of our faults from that of God's infinite mercy. We should see, on the contrary, our frailty and wretchedness under the radiation of the helpful, infinite Goodness. The examination made in this way, instead of discouraging us, will increase our confidence in God.

The sight of our faults shows us also by contrast the value of virtue. It has been said with great truth that the value of justice is brought home to us especially by the grief which injustice causes us. The sight of the injustice we have committed and our regret for having committed it, should make us "hunger and thirst after justice." The ugliness of sensuality should reveal to us by contrast all the value of purity; the disorder of anger and envy should make us feel the great value of true meekness and true charity; the sight of the disastrous effects of spiritual sloth should reanimate in us the desire for generosity and spiritual joy. The aberration of pride should make us experience to some extent all the wisdom and grandeur of true humility.

For all these reasons, one of the best ways to make an examination of conscience is to do so in the light of the Savior's words: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

Let ns ask the Lord to inspire us with the holy hatred of sin, which separates us from the infinite goodness of God, from whom we have received the greatest benefits and who promises us still more precious gifts if we are faithful. In some respects, the holy hatred of sin is nothing more than the reverse of the love of God. To love truth strongly without detesting error, is impossible; it is likewise impossible to have a strong love for the good and the sovereign Good, which is God, without hating what turns us away from God. In the hearts of the humblest and meekest saints, there is a holy hatred of evil, a hatred that is as strong as their love of God. In the immaculate heart of Mary there is, by reason of her ardent charity, a burning hatred of evil, and this hatred renders her terrible to the devil. According to Blessed Grignion de Montfort, the devil suffers more from being conquered by the humility and love of Mary than from being directly crushed by the divine Omnipotence. We should ask the immaculate heart of Mary and the sacred heart of our Savior, burning furnace of charity, for this holy hatred of evil, this holy hatred of pride, spiritual sloth, envy, unjust anger, malevolence, and sensuality, in order that true charity, the love of God and of souls in God, may truly grow ever stronger in us.

The means of avoiding pride is to think often of the humiliations of the Savior and to ask God for the virtue of humility. To repress envy, we should pray for our neighbor and wish him the same good as we desire for ourselves.

This type of mortification is absolutely indispensable. To advance seriously toward perfection and sanctity, we should think of the mortifications of the saints, or, even without going as far as the examples of the saints, think of those given us by servants of God such as Father Lacordaire who, fearing that he might fall into pride by reason of his successes, had recourse to great mortifications. On certain days while preaching at Notre Dame (Paris), he used to feel that a strong current of grace was passing through his soul to convert his hearers, and that, if he yielded to the sin of pride, this current of grace might be completely stopped and his preaching become absolutely fruitless. We should meditate on the fact that we also have our souls to save, that we must do good to those around us, good which will endure eternally. Let us also remember that we must work as much as possible for the salvation of other souls, and

that for this purpose we ought to employ the means that Christ has pointed out to us: progressive death to sin through progress in the virtues and especially in the love of God.

Sins of Ignorance, Frailty, and Malice

We have been told that people in certain milieux are inclined to think that only the sin of malice is mortal, and that so-called sins of ignorance and frailty are never mortal. On this point we should recall the teaching of theology, such as it is profoundly formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa.*™

The sin of ignorance is that which springs from voluntary and culpable ignorance, called vincible ignorance. The sin of frailty is that which arises from a strong passion which diminishes liberty and impels the will to give its consent. As for the sin of malice, it is committed with full liberty, *quasi de industria,* intentionally and often with premeditation, even without passion or ignorance. We shall recall what St. Thomas teaches about each of them.

Sins of Ignorance

In relation to the will, ignorance may be cither antecedent or consequent or concomitant. Antecedent ignorance is that which is in no way voluntary; it is said to be morally invincible. For example, thinking that he is firing at an animal in the forest, a hunter may kill a man who had given no sign of his presence and whom the hunter would never suspect of being there. In this case there is no voluntary fault, but only a material sin.

Consequent ignorance is that which is voluntary, at least indirectly so, because of negligence in learning what one can and ought to know. It is called vincible ignorance because one could free oneself from it with morally possible application. It is the cause of a formal sin, at least indirectly willed. For example, a medical student yields gravely to sloth; nevertheless, as it were by chance, he receives his medical degree. But he is ignorant of many elementary facts of his profession which he ought to know, and it happens that he hastens the death of some of his patients instead of curing them. In this case there is no directly voluntary sin, but there is certainly an indirectly

,e See la Ilae, q. 76-78.

voluntary fault, which may be grave and which may even go as far as homicide through imprudence or grave negligence.

Concomitant ignorance is that which is not voluntary, but which accompanies sin in such a way that, even if it did not exist, one would still sin. This is the case of a very vindictive man who, wishing to kill his enemy, one day, as a matter of fact, unwittingly does kill him, thinking that he is killing an animal in a thicket. This case is manifestly different from the two preceding cases.

We may conclude, consequently, that involuntary or invincible ignorance is not a sin, but that voluntary or vincible ignorance of what we could and should know is a more or less serious sin according to the gravity of the obligations in which we fail. Voluntary or vincible ignorance cannot completely excuse sin, for there was negligence; it only diminishes culpability. Absolutely involuntary or invincible ignorance completely exculpates from sin; it does away with culpability. As for concomitant ignorance, it does not excuse from sin, for, even if it did not exist, one would still sin.

Invincible ignorance is called "good faith." That ignorance be truly invincible or involuntary, it is necessary that the person cannot morally free himself from it by a serious effort to know his duties. It is impossible to be invincibly ignorant of the first precepts of the natural law: Do good and avoid evil; do not do to others what you would not wish them to do to you; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; one God alone you shall adore. At least by the order of the world, the starry sky, and the whole creation, man can easily obtain a knowledge of the probability of the existence of God, supreme Ordainer and Legislator. When he has this probability, he must seek to become more enlightened and must ask for light; otherwise he is not in genuine good faith or in absolutely involuntary and invincible ignorance. As much must be said of a Protestant for whom it becomes seriously probable that Catholicism is the true religion. He must clarify his idea by study and ask God for light. Unless he does this, as St. Alphonsus says, he already sins against faith by not wishing to take the means necessary to obtain it.

Pious people are often not sufficiently attentive to sins of ignorance, which they sometimes commit without considering, as they can and ought, their religious duties or the duties of their state, or again the rights and qualities of persons, superiors, equals, or inferiors with whom they are in relation. We arc responsible

not only for the inordinate acts that we place, but also for the omission of all the good that we ought to do, and that we would accomplish in fact if we had true zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. One of the causes of the present evils of society is found in the forgetfulness of these words of the Gospel: "The poor have the gospel preached to them," in the indifference of those who possess a superabundance toward those who lack even the necessaries of life.

Sins of Frailty

A sin of frailty is one which springs from a strong passion, which impels the will to give its consent. With this meaning, the Psalmist says: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." [17] The spiritual soul is weak when its will yields to the violence of the movements of the sensible appetites. It thus loses rectitude of practical judgment and of voluntary election or choice, by reason of fear, anger, or concupiscence. Thus, during the Passion, Peter yielded through fear and denied our Lord three times. When, by reason of a lively emotion or of a passion, we are inclined toward an object, the intellect is induced to judge that it is suitable for us, and the will to give its consent contrary to the divine law.[18]

But we must distinguish here the so-called antecedent passion, which precedes rhe consent of the will, and that called consequent, which follows it. Antecedent passion diminishes culpability, for it diminishes the liberty of judgment and of voluntary choice; it is particularly apparent in very impressionable people. On the contrary, consequent or voluntary passion does not lessen the gravity of sin, but augments it; or rather it is a sign that the sin is more voluntary, since the will itself arouses this inordinate movement of passion, as happens in a man who wishes to become angry the better to manifest his ill will.[19] Just as a good consequent passion, such as Christ's holy anger when He was driving the merchants from the Temple, increases the merit, so an evil consequent passion augments the demerit.

17 Ps. 6:3.

18 St. Thomas (Ia Ilae, q.58, a. 5; q.57, a. 5 ad 311m; q.77, a. 2) recalls on this subject the Aristotelian principle: "Such as a man is, such does the end seem to him . . . for the virtuous man judges aright of the end of virtue." Whence the adage: "I see the better and approve it, I follow the worse."

,e Cf. *ibid.,* q.77, a.6.

The sin of frailty, of which we are speaking here, is that in which the will yields to the impulse of an antecedent passion; and thereby the gravity of the sin is lessened. This does not mean, however, that it is never a mortal sin. It is truly mortal when the matter is grievous, and the sinner yields to passion with advertence and full consent. This is the case of homicide committed under the impulse of anger.20

A person can resist, especially at the beginning, the inordinate movement of passion. If he does not resist it at the beginning as he ought, if he does not pray as he ought to obtain the help of God, passion is no longer simply antecedent, it becomes voluntary.

The sin of frailty, even when serious and mortal, is more pardonable than another, but here "pardonable" is by no means a synonym for "venial" in the current meaning of this word.21

Even pious people ought to be attentive to this point for they may have unrepressed movements of jealousy which may lead them to grave faults: for example, to serious rash judgments and to words and exterior acts which are the cause of profound breaches, contrary both to justice and to charity.

It would be a gross error to think that only the sin of malice can be mortal because it alone implies the sufficient advertence, the full consent, together with the serious matter, necessary for the sin which gives death to the soul and renders it worthy of eternal death. Such an error would result from a badly formed conscience, and would contribute to increase this deformity. Let us remember that we can easily resist the beginning of the inordinate movement of passion, and that it is a duty for us to do so and also to pray for help, according to the words of St. Augustine, quoted by the Council of Trent: "God never commands the impossible, but, in commanding, He warns us to do what we are able and to ask Him for help to do that which we cannot." 22

The Sin of Malice

In contradistinction to the sin of ignorance and that of frailty, the sin of malice is that by which one chooses evil knowingly. In Latin

20 *Ibid.,* a. 8.

21 *Ibid.,* ad mm.

22 Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. 11 (Dcnzinger, no. 804), from St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia,* chap. 42, no. 50.

it is called a sin *de industria,* that is, a sin committed with deliberate calculation, design, and express intention, free from ignorance and even from antecedent passion. The sin of malice is often premeditated. This is not equivalent to saying that evil is willed for the sake of evil; since the adequate object of the will is the good, it can will evil only under the aspect of an apparent good.

Now he who sins through malice, acting with full knowledge of the case and through evil will, knowingly wills a spiritual evil (for example, the loss of charity or divine friendship) in order to possess a temporal good. It is clear that this sin thus defined differs in the degree of gravity from the sin of ignorance and that of frailty. But we must not conclude from this that every sin of malice is a sin against the Holy Ghost. This last sin is one of the gravest of the sins of malice. It is produced when a man rejects through contempt the very thing that would save him or deliver him from evil: for example, when he combats recognized religious truth, or when by reason of jealousy, he deliberately grows sad over the graces and spiritual progress of his neighbor.

The sin of malice often proceeds from a vice engendered by multiple faults; but it can exist even in the absence of this vice. It is thus that the first sin of the devil was a sin of malice, not of habitual malice but of actual malice, of evil will, of an intoxication of pride.

It is clear that the sin of malice is graver than the sins of ignorance and frailty, although these last are sometimes mortal. This explains why human laws inflict greater punishment for premeditated murder than for that committed through passion.

The greatest gravity of the sins of malice comes from the fact that they are more voluntary than the others, from the fact that they generally proceed from a vice engendered by repeated sins, and from the fact that by them man knowingly prefers a temporal good to the divine friendship, without the partial excuse of a certain ignorance or of a strong passion.

In these questions one may err in two ways that are contradictory to each other. Some lean to the opinion that only the sin of malice can be mortal; they do not see with sufficient clearness the gravity of certain sins of voluntary ignorance and of certain sins of frailty, in which, nevertheless, there is serious matter, sufficient advertence, and full consent.

Others, on the contrary, do nor sec clearly enough the gravity

of certain sins of malice committed in cold blood, with an affected moderation and a pretense of good will or of tolerance. Those who thus combat the true religion and take away from children the bread of divine truth may be sinning more gravely than he who blasphemes and kills someone under the impulse of anger.

Sin is so much the more grave as it is more voluntary, as it is committed with greater light and proceeds from a more inordinate love of self, which sometimes even goes so far as contempt of God. On the other hand, a virtuous act is more or less meritorious according as it is more voluntary, more free, and as it is inspired by a greater love of God and neighbor, a love that may even reach holy contempt of self, as St. Augustine says.

Thus he who prays with too great attachment to sensible consolation merits less than he who perseveres in prayer in a continual and profound aridity without any consolation. But on emerging from this trial, his merit does not grow less if his prayer proceeds from an equal degree of charity which now has a happy reaction on his sensibility. It is still true that one interior act of pure love is of greater value in the eyes of God than many exterior works inspired by a lesser charity.

In all these questions, whether good or evil is involved, particular attention must be paid to what proceeds from our higher faculties, the intellect and will: that is, to the act of the will following full knowledge of the case. And, from this point of view, if an evil act committed with full deliberation and consent, like a formal pact with the devil, has formidable consequences, a good act, such as the oblation of self to God, made with full deliberation and consent and frequently renewed, can have even greater consequences in the order of good; for the Holy Ghost is of a certainty infinitely more powerful than the spirit of evil, and He can do more for our sanctification than the latter can for our ruin. It is well to think of this in the face of the gravity of certain present-day events. The love of Christ, dying on the cross for us, pleased God more than all sins taken together displeased Him; so the Savior is more powerful to save us than the enemy of good is to destroy us. With this meaning, Christ said: "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." [28] Unless we open the door of our hearts to him, the enemy

[28] Matt. 10:28.

of good cannot penetrate into the sanctuary of our will, whereas God is closer to us than we are to ourselves and can lead us strongly and sweetly to the most profound and elevated meritorious free acts, to acts that are the prelude of eternal life.

CHAPTER XXII

The Predominant Fault

AFTER treating of the principal sins to be avoided and of their roots and consequences to be mortified, it is fitting that we discuss in a special way the predominant fault that exists in each of us. That we may proceed with order, we must first see in what this fault consists, then how to recognize or discern it, and lastly how to combat it.

Definition of the Predominant Fault

The predominant fault is the defect in us that tends to prevail over the others, and thereby over our manner of feeling, judging, sympathizing, willing, and acting. It is a defect that has in each of us an intimate relation to our individual temperament.[1] There are temperaments inclined to effeminacy, indolence, sloth, gluttony, and sensuality. Others are inclined especially to anger and pride. We do not all climb the same slope toward the summit of perfection: those who are effeminate by temperament must by prayer, grace, and virtue become strong; and those who are naturally strong, to the point of easily becoming severe, must, by working at themselves and by grace, become gentle.

Before this progressive transformation of our temperament, the predominant defect in the soul often makes itself felt. It is our domestic enemy, dwelling in our interior; for, if it develops, it may succeed in completely ruining the work of grace or the interior

[1] Our individual temperament is generally quite determined along one line, according to the principle, *natura determinatur ad unum.* This is why it must be perfected by the different virtues, which will permit us to act in a reasonable and Christian manner, under different circumstances, in relation to different people: for example, in relation to superiors, inferiors, and equals, and according to the various situations in which we are placed.

life. At times it is like a crack in a wall that seems to be solid but is not so; like a crevice, imperceptible at times but deep, in the beautiful façade of a building, which a vigorous jolt may shake to the foundations. For example, an antipathy, an instinctive aversion to someone, may, if it is not watched over and corrected by right reason, the spirit of faith, and charity, produce disasters in the soul and lead it to grave injustice. By yielding to such an antipathy, it does itself far more harm than it does its neighbor, for it is much more harmful to commit injustice than to be the object of it.

The predominant fault is so much the more dangerous as it often compromises our principal good point, which is a happy inclination of our nature that ought to develop and to be increased by grace. For example, a man is naturally inclined to gentleness; but if by reason of his predominant fault, which may be effeminacy, his gentleness degenerates into weakness, into excessive indulgence, he may even reach the complete loss of energy. Another, on the contrary, is naturally inclined to fortitude, but if he gives free rein to his irascible temperament, fortitude in him degenerates into unreasonable violence, the cause of every type of disorder.

In every man there is a mixture of good and bad inclinations; there is a predominant fault and also a natural quality. If we are in the state of grace, we have a special attraction of grace, which generally perfects first of all what is best in our nature, and then radiates over that which is less good. Some are thus more inclined toward contemplation, others toward action. Particular care must be taken that the predominant fault does not snuff out our principal natural quality or our special attraction of grace. Otherwise our soul would resemble a field of wheat invaded by tares or cockle, of which the Gospel speaks. And we have an adversary, the devil, who seeks to foster the growth of our predominant fault that he may place us in conflict with those who work with us in the Lord's field. Christ Himself tells us: "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way." [2] Christ explains that the enemy is the devil,[3] who seeks to destroy the work of God by creating disunion among those who, in a holy manner, ought to collaborate in the same work for eternity. He is

[*] Matt. 13:24 f.
[▮] *Ibid.,* 39.

skillful in exaggerating in our eyes the defects of our neighbor, in transforming a grain of sand into a mountain, in setting up, as it were, a magnifying glass in our imagination, that we may become irritated at our brethren instead of working with them. Considering all this, we can see what evil may spring up in each of us from our principal fault if we are not most attentive to it. At times it is like a devouring worm in a beautiful fruit.

How to Recognize the Predominant Fault

Evidently it is of primary importance that we recognize our predominant fault and have no illusions about it. This is so much the more necessary as our adversary, the enemy of our soul, knows it quite well and makes use of it to stir up trouble in and about us. In the citadel of our interior life, which is defended by the different virtues, the predominant fault is the weak spot, undefended by the theological and moral virtues. The enemy of souls seeks exactly this easily vulnerable point in each one, and he finds it without difficulty. Therefore, we must recognize it also.

But how can we discern it? For beginners who are sincere, this is quite easy. But later the predominant fault is less apparent, for it tries to hide itself and to put on the appearances of a virtue: pride clothes itself in the outward appearances of magnanimity, and pusillanimity seeks to cover itself with those of humility. Yet we must succeed in discerning the predominant fault, for if we do not know it, we cannot fight it; and if we do not fight it, we have no true interior life.

That we may discern it, we must first of all ask God for light: "Lord, make me know the obstacles I more or less consciously place in the way of the working of Thy grace in me .Then give me the strength to rid myself of them, and, if I am negligent in doing so, do Thou deign to free me from them, though I should suffer greatly."

After thus asking sincerely for light, we must make a serious examination. How? By asking ourselves: "Toward what do my most ordinary preoccupations tend, in the morning when I awake, or when I am alone? Where do my thoughts and desires go spontaneously?" We should keep in mind that the predominant fault, which easily commands all our passions, takes on the appearance of a virtue and, if it is not opposed, it may lead to impenitence. Judas

fell into impenitence through avarice, which he did not will to dominate; it led him to impenitence like a violent wind that hurls a ship on the rocks.

A second step in discerning the predominant fault, is to ask ourselves: "What is generally the cause or source of my sadness and joy? What is the general motive of my actions, the ordinary origin of my sins, especially when it is not a question of an accidental sin, but rather a succession of sins or a state of resistance to grace, notably when this resistance persists for several days and leads me to omit my exercises of piety?" Then we must seek sincerely to know the motive of the soul's refusal to return to the good.

In addition, we must ask ourselves: "What does my director think of this? In his opinion, what is my predominant fault? He is a better judge than I am." No one, in fact, is a good judge in his own case; here self-love deceives us. Often our director has discovered this fault before we have; perhaps he has tried more than once to talk to us about it. Have we not sought to excuse ourselves? Excuses come promptly, for the predominant fault easily excites all our passions: it commands them as a master, and they obey instantly. Thus, wounded self-love immediately excites irony, anger, impatience. Moreover, when the predominant fault has taken root in us, it experiences a particular repugnance to being unmasked and fought, because it wishes to reign in us. This condition sometimes reaches such a point that, when our neighbor accuses us of this fault, we reply that we have many bad habits, but truly not the one mentioned.[4]

The predominant fault may also be recognized by the temptations that our enemy arouses most frequently in us, for he attacks us especially through this weak point in our soul.

Lastly, in moments of true fervor the inspirations of the Holy Ghost ask us for the sacrifice of this particular fault.

If we have sincere recourse to these different means of discernment, it will not be too difficult for us to recognize this interior enemy which we bear within ourselves and which enslaves us: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin,"[5] says our Lord.

[4] St. Thomas would see in this an application of the principle formulated by Aristotle, which the saint quotes often: *Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei;* that is, "Every man judges of what is good according to his good or evil interior dispositions."

[5] John 8:34.

It is like an interior prison that we bear about with us wherever we go. We must earnestly aspire to deliverance.

It would be a great grace for us if we were to meet a saint who would say: "This is your predominant fault and this your principal attraction of grace which you must follow generously to reach union with God." In this way Christ applied the name, "sons of thunder" (Boanerges) [6] to the young apostles James and John who wished to call down fire from heaven on a city that had refused to receive them. We read in St. Luke: "He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save." [7] In the school of the Savior, the Boanerges became such gentle souls that toward the end of his life St. John the Evangelist could say only one thing: "My little children, . . . love one another." [8] When asked why he always repeated the same exhortation, he used to reply: "This is His commandment. . . . And he that keepeth His commandments, abideth in Him and He in him." John had lost nothing of his ardor, of his thirst for justice, but it had become spiritualized and was accompanied by a great gentleness.

How to Combat the Predominant Fault

Because the predominant fault is our principal interior enemy, we must combat it. When it is conquered, temptations are no longer very dangerous, but are rather occasions of progress.

The predominant fault is not conquered, however, as long as there is no true progress in piety or the interior life, as long as the soul has not attained to a true and stable fervor of will; in other words, to that promptness of the will in the service of God which is, according to St. Thomas, the essence of true devotion.[9] In this spiritual warfare, we must have recourse to three principal means: prayer, examination of conscience, and a sanction.

Our prayer must be sincere: "Lord, show me the principal obstacle to my sanctification, the one that hinders me from profiting by graces and also by the exterior difficulties that would work to the good of my soul if I had greater recourse to Thee when they

[6] Mark 3:17.
[7] Luke 9:55 f.
[8] See 1 John 3:18, 23.
[9] Cf. IIa IIae, q.82, a. 1 f.

arise." The saints went so far as to say, as St. Louis Bertrand did: "Lord, here burn, here cut, and dry up in me all that hinders me from going to Thee, that Thou mayest spare me in eternity." Blessed Nicholas of Fliie used to pray: "Lord, take from me everything that hinders me from going to Thee. Give me all that will lead me to Thee. Take me from myself and give me to Thyself."

This prayer does not dispense us from self-examination; on the contrary, it leads to it. And, as St. Ignatius says, it is especially suitable for beginners to write down each week the number of times they have yielded to their predominant fault which seeks to reign in them like a despot. It is easier to laugh fruitlessly at this method than to apply it fruitfully. If we keep track of the money we spend and receive, it is still more useful to know what we lose and what we gain from the spiritual point of view for eternity.

It is also highly proper to impose a sanction, or penance, on ourselves each time we fall into this defect. This penance may take the form of a prayer, a moment of silence, an exterior or an interior mortification. It makes reparation for the fault and satisfaction for the penalty due it. At the same time we acquire more circumspection for the future. Thus many persons have cured themselves of the habit of cursing by imposing on themselves the obligation of giving an alms in reparation each time they fail.

Before conquering our predominant fault, our virtues are often, to speak more properly, natural good inclinations rather than true and solid virtues that have taken root in us. Prior to victory over this fault, the fountain of graces is not yet adequately opened on our soul, for we still seek ourselves too much and do not live sufficiently for God.

In addition, we must overcome pusillanimity, which leads us to think that our predominant fault cannot be eradicated. With grace we can overcome it, because, as the Council of Trent says, quoting St. Augustine: "God never commands the impossible; but in giving us His precepts, He commands us to do what we can, and to ask for the grace to accomplish what we cannot do." [10]

It has been said that the spiritual combat is in this case more necessary than victory, for, if we dispense ourselves from this struggle, we abandon the interior life, we no longer tend toward perfection. We must not make peace with our faults.

10 Council of Trent, Scss. VI, chap. 2.

Moreover, credence must not be given to our adversary when he seeks to persuade us that this struggle is suitable only for the saints that they may reach the highest regions of spirituality. The truth is that without this persevering and efficacious struggle we cannot sincerely aspire to Christian perfection, toward which the supreme precept makes it a duty for all of us to tend. This precept is, in fact, without limit: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself." [11]

Without this struggle, there is no interior joy or peace, for the tranquillity of order or peace comes from the spirit of sacrifice. It alone establishes us interiorly in order by putting to death all that is inordinate in us.[12]

Lastly, charity, the love of God and of souls in God, finally prevails completely over the predominant fault; it then truly occupies the first place in our soul and reigns there effectively. Mortification, which makes our principal fault disappear, delivers us and assures the predominance in our soul of our true natural qualities and of our special attraction of grace. Thus little by little, we grow to be ourselves, in the broad sense of the word, that is, to be supernaturally ourselves minus our defects. We do not have to copy in a more or less servile manner another's qualities, or enter a uniform mold that is the same for all. There is a great variety in human personalities, just as no two leaves or flowers are perfectly similar. But a person's temperament must not be crushed; it must be transformed while keeping whatever is good in it. In our temperament, our character must be the imprint of the acquired and infused virtues, especially of the theological virtues. Then, instead of instinctively referring everything to self, as is the case when the predominant fault reigns, we will turn everything back to God, think almost continually of Him, and live for Him alone; at the same time we will lead to Him those with whom we come into contact.

Note

That we may know ourselves better, we should vary the examination of conscience, making it at times according to the order of the

[11] Luke 10:27.

[12] Sloth is one of the predominant faults most difficult to overcome. However, success is possible with the help of grace.

commandments of God and the precepts of the Church; at other times, following the order of the moral and theological virtues; or considering the sins opposed to these different virtues, indicated in the two following outlines:

Inordinate love of self	Pride	regard to self	'Vainglory, from which come: disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, contention through rivalry, discord, singularity, stubbornness.
			Acedia (sloth), hatred of spiritual things, whence are born: malice, rancor, pusillanimity, discouragement, spiritual torpor, forgetfulness of the precepts, seeking after forbidden things.
	Concupiscence	in regard to one's neighbor	Envy, from which spring: hatred, detraction, calumny, joy at the misfortune of another, sadness at his success.
			Anger, whence come: disputes, fits of passion, insults, contumely, blasphemy.
		of the eyes	Avarice, whence proceed: perfidy, fraud, deceit, perjury, itch to acquire and excessive anxiety to keep, harshness, hardness of heart.
		of the flesh	Gluttony, which engenders: improper jokes, buffoonery, impurity, foolish conversation, stupidity.
			Lust, whence proceed: spiritual blindness, poor judgment, impetuosity (of decision), inconstancy, love of self even to hatred of God, attachment to the present life which destroys hope of eternal life.

Virtues	theological	Charity	'toward God, and gift of wisdom	disgust for spiritual things	Contrary vices
			toward one's neighbor and mercy	envy, discord, scandal	
		Hope	confidence, abandonment, and the gift of fear, opposed to presumption	presumption despair	
		Faith, and the spirit of faith, and the gifts of understanding and knowledge		infidelity, blasphemy, blindness, culpable ignorance	
	cardinal	Prudence, docility to good counsels and the gift of counsel		imprudence and negligence, carnal prudence, cunning	
		Justice, and the connected virtues of religion (gift of piety), penance, filial piety, obedience, gratitude, veracity, fidelity, liberality		injustice, impiety, superstition, hypocrisy, lying	
		Fortitude, and the gift of fortitude, with magnanimity, patience and perseverance		rash boldness, cowardliness, and pusillanimity	
		Temperance, sobriety and chastity, with meekness and humility		intemperance, lust, anger, pride, and curiosity	

CHAPTER XXIII

Passions to be Regulated

THERE can be no interior life without a struggle against self in order to regulate and discipline the passions, to cause the light of right reason and even that of infused faith and of Christian prudence to descend into these movements of the sensible appetites. There is far more than we think in the expression, to discipline one's sensible appetite; it should receive discipline like a docile pupil who is being trained. Consequently it is fitting that we speak of the passions. To proceed in an orderly fashion, we must consider them from the psychological, the moral, and the essentially ascetical point of view. We shall follow the teaching of St. Thomas.[1]

The Passions from the Psychological Point of View

St. Thomas, who follows Aristotle and St. John Damascene, defines passion thus: "A movement of the sensitive appetite when we imagine good or evil. . . . A passion is properly to be found where there is corporeal transmutation." [2]

When we say that it is a movement of the sensible appetite, common to man and animal, a distinction is made between passion and a movement of the spiritual will, called the rational appetite. Neither must the movement of the sensible appetite be confused with corporeal movements: for example, with the beating of the heart that follows it. These movements of the sensitive appetite which are the passions manifestly exist in the animal: for example, when it desires its food, and in it passion is now under a mild form, as in the dove or the lamb, now under a violent form, as in the wolf, the tiger, or the lion.

[1] Cf. Ia IIae, q. 22-28.
[2] *Ibid.,* q.22, a. 3.

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas distinguishes and classifies the different passions in a remarkable manner. He distinguishes first of all the concupiscible appetite, which inclines one to seek for sensible and delectable good and to flee injurious evil, and the irascible appetite, which inclines one to resist obstacles and, in spite of them, to obtain a difficult good. There are animals and men dominated by the irascible appetite, others dominated by the concupiscible.

In the concupiscible appetite, in regard to sensible good which attracts, three passions are distinguished: the love of this sensible good, whether it is present or absent; the desire of this good, if it is absent; the joy, if it is present. These movements of the sensible appetite are seen in the animal to which food is brought or from which it is removed.

On the contrary, in reference to evil to be avoided, we distinguish in the concupiscible, hatred, aversion, and sadness. Thus the lamb instinctively flees from the wolf.

In the irascible appetite, in reference to the good difficult to obtain *{bonum arduum),* there are the two passions of hope and of despair or dejection, according as this good appears obtainable or unobtainable. And in this same appetite, with regard to injurious evil to be repulsed, there is audacity and fear, according as this evil is easy or difficult to repulse, and also anger, if it is a question of a present evil to be surmounted or an insult to be avenged.

In the spiritual will there are analogous movements of love, desire, joy, hope, and so on, but these are of an immaterial order, whereas the passion is always accompanied by a movement of the organism, because of the fact that the sensible appetite is united to an organ.

Among all the passions, the first of all, presupposed by all the others, is sensible love: for example, in the animal, love of the food that it needs. From this love are born desire, joy, hope, audacity, or hatred of what is contrary, aversion, sadness, despair, fear, anger.§

From what we have said, it is evident that passion, as it has been defined, is not always lively, vehement, and dominant. However, many modern authors apply the term "passion" to a particularly intense movement of the sensible appetite and reserve "emotion" to others that are less strong.

§ Cf. Bossuet, *De la connaissance de Dieu et de soi-?nê?ne,* chap, i, § *6.*

Passion from the Moral Point of View

From the moral point of view, the passions have been widely discussed. The partisans of the morality of pleasure have said that all passions are good, as the legitimate expansion of our nature. This justification of the passions is found among both ancient and modern writers.

The Stoics, on the contrary, condemned the passions, saying that they are a movement which, opposed to right reason, troubles the soul. According to them, the wise man must suppress the passions and reach impassibility.

Aristotle, followed by St. Thomas, states more profoundly that the passions or emotions, considered as such, are morally neither good nor bad, but become morally good if they are aroused or regulated by right reason and the will which utilizes them as powers, or they become morally bad if they are not conformable to right reason. Their morality depends on the intention of the will, which is always either good or bad, according as it bears or does not bear on a worthy end. Thus, anger may be holy or, on the contrary, unreasonable. Christ willed to show holy indignation when driving the vendors from the Temple and overturning their tables.[4] Likewise, in Gethsemane Christ, who was about to expiate all our sins, willed to be sorrowful even unto death to make us understand the sorrow we should have for our own sins.

Therefore, if the passions or emotions are regulated, moderated by right reason, they are morally good; they are forces to be used in the service of virtue: for example, courage, which is a virtue, makes use of hope and audacity while moderating them. Likewise modesty, which is a laudable emotion, helps the virtue of chastity, and that other emotion, known as sensible pity toward the unfortunate, renders easy for us the exercise of the virtue of mercy. The act of virtue, St. Thomas says,[3] is even more meritorious when it makes good use of the passions in view of a virtuous end.

It is clear, in fact, that God has given us our sensible appetites, as He has given us our exterior senses and imagination, as He has given us our two arms, that we may use them in view of a moral good. Thus utilized, the passions when well regulated are powers.

[4] John 1:15.
[*] Cf. la Ilae, q.24, a. 3.

And whereas the so-called antecedent passion, which precedes judgment, clouds the reason, as happens in the fanatic or the sectarian, the so-called consequent passion, which follows the judgment of right reason illumined by faith, increases merit and shows the power of good will for a great cause. With this meaning, Pascal could say: "Nothing great is accomplished without passion," without this flame of sensibility, which is like the radiation of zeal or the ardor of love of God and of neighbor. This zeal consumed the hearts of the saints and showed itself in their courage and endurance.

But the inordinate or undisciplined passions become vices because of their inordinateness: sensible love becomes gluttony or luxury; aversion becomes jealousy, envy; audacity becomes temerity; fear becomes cowardliness or pusillanimity.

When these inordinate passions precede the judgment of reason, they trouble it and can diminish responsibility, merit, and demerit; when they follow judgment and are willed, they increase the malice of the act.[e] Then instead of being powers in the service of goodness, they are in the service of perversity. Whereas in the souls of the saints, of missioners, and of martyrs, a perfectly ordered passion is a power that manifests and serves the love of God and neighbor; in the soul of a criminal, it manifests and serves unbridled self-love.

The Passions from the Ascetical Point of View

According to the principles we have just recalled, we shall consider the passions from the ascetical point of view in their relation to the interior life. From these principles it follows that the passions, being in themselves neither good nor bad, ought not to be extirpated like vices, but should be moderated, regulated; properly speaking, they should be disciplined by right reason illumined by faith, if they are immoderate, they become the roots of vices; if they are disciplined, they are placed at the service of the virtues. A man must not be inert and, as it were, made of straw, nor should he be violent and irascible.

Little by little the light of reason and the superior light of infused faith must descend into our sensible appetites that they may not be like those of an animal without reason, but those of a rational being, of a child of God, who shares in the intimate life of the Most High.

e Cf. *ibid.*

We should direct our thoughts to Christ's sensible appetites, which were pure and strong because of the virtues of virginity, patience, and constancy even to the death of the cross.[7] Let us also think of the sensibility of Mary, Virgin most pure and Mother of Sorrows, coredemptress of the human race. We shall thus see how our sensible appetites ought to be ever more and more subjected to our intellect illumined by faith, to our will vivified by charity, and how the light and living flame of the spirit ought to radiate over our emotions to sanctify them and place them at the service of God and of our neighbor. St. Paul exhorts us, saying: "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep." [8] This is characteristic of the saints; they manifest admirable delicacy of feeling for the afflicted; at times they alone can find words which uplift and fortify.

From this point of view, the passions must be moderated, not materially but proportionately to what reason requires in relation to a more or less lofty given end to be reached in given circumstances. Thus, without sinning, a person may experience great sadness, great fear, or lively indignation in certain grave circumstances. We read in Exodus [9] that Moses, seeing the Israelites adoring the golden calf, crushed this idol to dust and punished with great severity those who were most guilty. In the First Book of Kings,[10] the priest Heli is reprimanded for not having become indignant at the evil conduct of his sons. On the road to perfection, those who are naturally meek must become strong, and those who are naturally inclined to be strong-willed must become gentle. Both are climbing toward the summit by different slopes.

To drive a horse well, now the bit must be used, and now the whip; the same applies to the governing of the passions. At times they must be checked, and at other times awakened, jolted, in order to react against sloth, inertia, timidity, or fear. At times a great effort is required to break an impetuous horse; the same is true of disciplining certain temperaments capable of great tilings. How beautiful it is to see these temperaments transformed by the profound impress of a Christian character after ten or fifteen years of self-discipline!

With a view to the interior life, one must be particularly attentive,

» Cf. Illa, q. 15, a.4-7,9.
" Rom. 12:15.
v Exod. 32:19.
10 Chap. 2.

above all at the beginning, to a special point: that is, to be on guard against precipitation and also against the dominant passion, that it may not become a predominant fault. As we have already spoken of the predominant fault, we here insist on precipitation to be avoided or, as the expression goes, on impulsiveness, which inclines one to act without sufficient reflection.

With rash haste many beginners, otherwise very good, at times wish to make too rapid progress, more rapid than their degree of grace warrants. They desire to travel rapidly because of a certain unconscious presumption; then, when trial comes, they sometimes let themselves be cast down at least for a moment. This condition is similar to what happens also in young students at the beginning of their curiosity in their work; when it is satisfied or when application becomes too painful, negligence and sloth follow. As a matter of fact, the happy medium of virtue, which is at the same time a summit above two opposing vices, like strength above temerity and cowardliness, is not attained immediately.

Properly speaking, what is precipitation? St. Thomas [11] defines it as a manner of acting by impulsion of the will or of the passion, without prudence, precaution, or sufficient consideration. It is a sin directly opposed to prudence and the gift of counsel. It leads to temerity in judgment and is comparable to the haste of one who descends a staircase too rapidly and falls, instead of walking composedly.

From the moral point of view, one should descend in a thoughtful manner from reason, which determines the end to be attained, to the operations to be accomplished without neglecting the steps that intervene, that is, the memory of things past, intelligent attention to present circumstances, shrewdness in foreseeing obstacles that may arise, docility in following authorized advice. One must take time to deliberate before acting; "one should deliberate slowly and without haste," as Aristotle used to say. Afterward one must sometimes act with great promptness.

If, on the contrary, a person is inclined to action by the impulse of the will or of the passion, while neglecting the intervening steps we have just mentioned, the memory of the past, attention to the present, foresight of the future, and docility, such a person stumbles and falls. This is inevitable.

11 Sec Ila Ilae, q.53, a.3; q.54, a. 1 ad 211m.

What are the causes of precipitation? As spiritual writers say, this defect comes from the fact that we substitute our own natural activity for the divine action. We act with feverish ardor, without sufficient reflection, without prayer for the light of the Holy Ghost, without the advice of our spiritual director. At times this natural haste is the cause of extremely imprudent acts that are very harmful in their results.

Natural haste often arises from the fact that we consider only the proximate end to be attained today, without seeing its relation to the supreme end toward which we must direct our steps. Seeing only this immediate human end, we direct our efforts toward it by natural activity, without sufficient recourse to the help of God.

We can see in the training that Christ gave His apostles how often He warned them against this precipitation or natural haste, which causes a man to act without sufficient reflection and without a sufficiently great spirit of faith. Some pages back, we recalled that James and John on returning from their first apostolate, during which a town refused to receive their preaching, asked our Lord to send fire from heaven on this village. With divine irony, Christ then called them Boanerges,[12] or "sons of thunder," to remind them that they should be sons of God and, like Him, should also be patient in awaiting the return of sinners. James and John understood; so well indeed, that John at the end of his life could only say: "Love one another, this is the commandment of the Lord." In Christ's school, the Boanerges become gentle; yet they do not lose their ardor or their zeal, but this zeal becomes patient, gentle, and less fiery, and bears lasting fruits, the fruits of eternity.

We would do well also to remember how St. Peter, who was called to a high degree of sanctity, was cured of his rash haste and presumption. When our Lord announced His passion, Peter said to Him: "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized. Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee, that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny Me thrice." [13] Humbled by his sin, Peter was cured of his presumption. He no longer counted on himself, but on divine grace by asking to be faithful to it; and grace led him to the very heights of sanctity by the way of martyrdom.

12 Mark 3:17.
13 Matt. 16:33 *f*.

The precipitation we are speaking of sometimes leads young, generous, and ardent souls to wish to reach the summit of perfection more rapidly than grace, without any delay en route, without taking into consideration the intermediary degrees and the mortification necessary for disciplining the passions, as if they had already reached divine union. They sometimes read works on mysticism with avidity and curiosity, and gather from them beautiful flowers before fruit has time to form. They thus expose themselves to many illusions and, when disillusionment comes, they expose themselves to the danger of falling into spiritual sloth and pusillanimity. We should walk at a good pace, indeed with an ever firmer and more rapid step in proportion as we draw near to God who attracts us the more, but we must avoid what St. Augustine calls "great strides off the right road."

The effects of this haste and of the self-satisfaction that accompany it, are the loss of interior recollection, perturbation, and fruitless agitation, which has only the outward appearances of productive action, as glass beads counterfeit diamonds.

The remedies for precipitation are easily indicated. Since this defect comes from the fact that we substitute our natural, hasty action for that of God, the chief remedy is to be found in a complete dependence in regard to God and in the conformity of our will to His. For this, we must reflect seriously before acting; pray humbly for the light of the Holy Ghost, and also heed the advice of our spiritual director, who has the grace of state to guide us. Then gradually precipitation will be replaced by habitual docility to the action of God in us. We shall be a little less satisfied with ourselves, and we shall find greater peace and, from time to time, true joy in God.

To discipline the passions, we must be alert to combat vivacity of temperament united to presumption, which springs from too great esteem of self; we must also contend against effeminacy, and against sloth, which would be even more harmful to the interior life. By this slow persevering work, on which we should daily examine ourselves, the ardent, the Boanerges, must become meek without losing true spiritual ardor, which is zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And the meek also, who are perhaps inclined by nature to effeminacy, heedlcssness, and negligence, must become strong. Both will thus ascend by different slopes toward the summit of perfection. And they will sec that it is a great thing to know how

to discipline themselves gradually, to conduct themselves well, or to put it better, to know how to remain habitually faithful to grace, without which, in the order of salvation, we can do nothing.

Then the passions, no longer inordinate but disciplined, will become powers truly useful for the good of our soul and that of others. Audacity will be at the service of a fortitude that will dominate thoughtless fear when, for example, there is a question of coming promptly to the help of our neighbor in distress. Likewise meekness, which presupposes a great mastery over self, will repress anger so that it may never be anything but the holy indignation of zeal, of a zeal which, without losing any of its ardor, remains patient and meek and is the sign of sanctity.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Active Purification of the Senses or of the Sensible Appetites

> "If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."
> Matt. 5:29

NOW that we have discussed the sins to be avoided, their consequences to be mortified, and the passions to be disciplined, we must treat of the active purification of the senses and of the sensible appetites, then of that of the intellect and the will. We shall then speak of the purification of the soul through the sacraments and prayer, and finally of the passive purification of the senses, which, according to St. John of the Cross, is at the threshold of the illuminative way.

The Principles to be Applied

When we treated [1] of mortification in general according to the Gospel and St. Paul, we saw that it is imposed on us for four principal motives: (1) because of the consequences of original sin, especially of concupiscence; (2) because of the effects of our personal sins; (3) because of the infinite elevation of our supernatural end (God seen as He sees Himself), which demands a subjection not only of the senses to reason, but of reason to the spirit of faith and to charity; (4) finally, because of the necessity of carrying the cross in order to follow Christ who died for us.

We must now apply these principles and see, first of all, what the mortification or active purification of the senses and of the sensible appetites should be.

[1] Cf. *supra,* chaps. 19 f.

St. Thomas treats this subject at length when he discusses the passions in general and in particular, also the seven capital sins and their results, and finally when he speaks of the virtues that have their seat in the sensible appetites, such as temperance, chastity, fortitude, patience, meekness, and so on.

Among the great masters of the spiritual life, St. John of the Cross deals with this same subject in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*[2] and at the beginning of *The Dark Night,*[3] where he discusses the faults of beginners, or the seven capital sins transposed into the spiritual order: spiritual pride, spiritual gluttony, spiritual sloth, and so on.

Here we should recall the necessity of observing the precepts, especially the supreme precepts of love of God and of our neighbor, consequently of avoiding every mortal sin, and also of guarding ourselves better against our more or less deliberate venial sins. Although a man cannot, without a very special help which the Blessed Virgin received, continually avoid all venial sins taken together, he can avoid each one of them in particular. He should also strive more and more to suppress imperfection, which is a lesser good, an act of a lesser degree of generosity in the service of God. The lesser good is not an evil; but, in the order of good, one should not stop at the lowest rung of the ladder, at the least degree of light and warmth. The happy medium of the acquired virtue of temperance, described by Aristotle, is doubtless already a good, but we should aspire higher, that is, to the happy mean of infused temperance, which, moreover, rises in proportion to the growth of this virtue, united to that of penance, especially when the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like that of fear, incline us to greater generosity in order the better to overcome ourselves and advance more rapidly.[4] Besides, there are still many degrees in this greater generosity, according, for example, as one ascends toward the summit of perfection

2 Cf. Bk. I, chaps. 4-12.

3 Cf. Bk. I, chaps. 11 ff.

4 We treated elsewhere at length of imperfection in so far as it is distinct from venial sin: cf. *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* Vol. I, Part II, chap. 6, pp. 360-90: "The lesser good is not an evil, but every man, according to his condition, must tend toward the perfection of charity." Cf. Salmanticenses, *Cursus theol., De peccatis,* disp. 19, dub. I, nos. 8 f.; *De Incarnatione,* in Illam P., S. Thomae, q. 15, a. 1. They show clearly that in our Lord there was neither venial sin nor imperfection, and they distinguish clearly between them.

by the winding road, which is easier, or by the straight road traced by St. John of the Cross,[5] which reaches its goal more rapidly and leads higher.

To avoid sin and imperfection, we must remember here that the capital sins dispose to others, which are often more serious, as vainglory does to disobedience, anger to blasphemy, avarice to hardness, gluttony to impurity, luxury to the hatred of God. We could never beg God too fervently for light to see the gravity of sin and to have a greater contrition for our faults. With fraternal charity, it is one of the greatest signs of spiritual progress.

We must also remember that venial sin, especially if it is repeated, disposes to mortal sin; for he who easily commits venial sin loses purity of intention, and if the occasion presents itself, he may sin mortally. Venial sin is thus on a dangerous slope, like a wall which hinders us from reaching union with God. On the road of perfection, he who does not advance, falls back.

Likewise imperfection, or an act not wholly generous, disposes us to venial sin. Acts that do not measure up to our degree of charity and of the other virtues *{actus remissi),* although they may still be meritorious, indirectly dispose us to redescend, for they do not exclude as much as they ought the inordinate inclinations which may cause us to fall. We shall discuss especially the mortification of sensuality and of anger.

The Mortification of Sensuality

We shall begin our consideration of this topic by recalling Christ's exhortation: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell." [6] Christian morality explains this text when, on the subject of the sixth commandment, it teaches that outside of marriage, carnal delectation directly willed with full deliberation is a mortal sin. In this case there is no light matter. Why? Because such direct consent disposes one proximately to a sin that is still more grave; it is like inserting a finger into a gear where the whole arm will be caught.

5 Cf. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel.* At the beginning of this work, St. John of the Cross placed a picture which shows the narrow path of perfection, then, far off, the road of the imperfect spirit and the road of the lost spirit.

• Matt. 5:29.

Here one is faced with avoiding a capital sin which leads to inconsiderateness, inconstancy, blindness of spirit, love of self even to hatred of God, and to despair.[7]

Therefore St. Paul strongly recalls the necessity of this mortification, of which he gives an example when he writes: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." [8] The consideration here is the mortification of the senses and of the body in order to assure the liberty of the spirit, and in order that the body may not weigh down the soul, but allow it to follow a higher life.[9]

St. Thomas [10] teaches that lust is avoided rather by flight from the occasions than by direct resistance, which makes one think too much of the thing to be fought against. On the contrary, acedia, or spiritual sloth, is overcome rather by resistance, for, in order to resist it, we think of spiritual goods, and the more we think of them, the more they attract us.

We should also seek to avoid as far as possible even indirectly voluntary movements of sensuality, especially when there is proximate

7 St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 153, a. 5.

8 Cf. I Cor. 9:27.

8 With this end in view, the Church prescribes certain days of fast and abstinence; with the same purpose, the founders of religious orders established certain special austerities, such as vigils, the discipline, and perpetual abstinence from meat. The saints do not deprive themselves of these means of preserving the perfection of absolute chastity. St. Dominic used to scourge himself three times every night: once, to expiate his own faults; a second time, for those of sinners; and a third, for the souls in purgatory. He consecrated the night to prayer and penance: he slept little, rarely before Matins, and never went to bed afterward. He used to go from one altar to another in the church, praying now on his knees, his arms extended or lifted like arrows above his head, now bowed over or prostrate on the ground. When sleep overcame him, he would lie down on the flagstones or rest his head against an altar. In his life this personal immolation was the accompaniment of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which our Savior's immolation is continued in a sacramental manner.

Doubtless such mortification presupposes exceptional graces; but there are certain austerities that we can all practice instead of seeking our comfort. For example, the habit of taking the discipline preserves us from many faults, keeps alive the love of austerity, expiates many negligences, and helps us to deliver souls from the bonds they have made for themselves. In a religious order the observances are a little like what the bark is to the tree: if the bark is peeled from a vigorous oak, the sap no longer rises, the tree withers and dies. The saints say: "If you mitigate observances, you relax souls," which will no longer have the enthusiasm needed to run in the way of perfection.

10 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 35, a. 1 nd 411111.

danger of consent. It is thus expedient for a number of people to avoid certain reading (works on medicine, for example) which might become dangerous for them because of their frailty, especially if they read through curiosity and not through a duty of state.[11]

From this point of view, we must also watch over certain affections which may become too sensible and even sensual. The author of *The Imitation* [12] tells us that we must avoid excessive familiarity with persons in order to enjoy our Lord's, and that certain affections which are too lively and too sensible cause us to lose peace of heart. St. Teresa says also in *The Way of Perfection* [13] that certain particular friendships are plagues which little by little make the soul lose fervor, then regularity, and which sometimes give rise to the most profound divisions in communities and compromise salvation.[14]

11 However, it is generally admitted that if by reason of a duty of state certain studies must be made which may produce some inordinate movement of sensuality, they can be made for a virtuous motive though it is foreseen that some so to speak material disorder may arise, which one does not directly wish to experience. Theologians teach in fact: "Carnal delectation, indirectly voluntary or not voluntary in itself but only in its cause, is not always a sin. There is often lacking the proximate danger of future consent, when the act placed is in itself upright and reasonable (as a surgical operation, or the reading of a book on medicine) from which one foresees but does not intend any carnal delectation."

12 Bk. I, chap. 6-8.

13 Cf. chap. 4.

14 St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 4: "Some, too, form spiritual friendships with others, the source of which is luxury and not spirituality. We may know it to be so by observing whether the remembrance of that affection increases our recollection and love of God, or brings remorse of conscience."

St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chap. 21, says on the subject of frivolous friendships, that radical measures must be taken to triumph over them: "Cut them, break them, tear them; do not amuse yourself in unraveling these criminal friendships; you must tear and rend them asunder; do not untie the knots, but break or cut them." In order the better to succeed, a person must divert himself by becoming absorbed in the duties of his state.

In regard to friendships in which there is a mingling of the natural and the supernatural, St. Francis de Sales says again *(ibid.,* chap. 20): "They begin with virtuous love, but if they do not use the utmost discretion, fond love will begin to mingle itself in it, then sensual love, and afterwards carnal love: yea, there is even danger in spiritual love, if wc are not extremely upon our guard; though in this it is more difficult to be imposed upon, because its purity and whiteness make the spots and stains which Satan seeks to mingle with it more apparent, and therefore, when he takes this in hand, he docs it more subtly, and endeavors to introduce impurities by almost insensible degrees."

At this point the mortification of the heart is no less necessary than that of the body and the senses.

Finally, care must be taken not to seek sensible consolations for their own sake in prayer through a sort of spiritual gluttony.[15] He who loves God not for Himself, but for the sensible consolations he receives or expects, is not in order. He loves himself first and God in the second place, as a person loves a product inferior to himself. This is an inverted order and, consequently, a more or less conscious perversion. By putting self first, one misuses what is most holy and exposes oneself to all temptations.

Spiritual enjoyments, sought for themselves, will awaken the passions dormant in our heart of flesh, and, instead of taking the road that the saints have followed, we slip insensibly down the slope along which the false mystics, especially the quietists, let themselves be drawn. *Corruptio optimi pessima,* the worst corruption is that

If in a friendship of this kind, the supernatural element dominates, the friendship may be kept through purifying it by the custody and mortification of the senses and the heart; if, on the contrary, the sensible element predominates, every particular relation over and above necessary meetings must be renounced for a considerable time. This is the teaching of all the masters.

15 Since ordinary gluttony leads, as St. Gregory says, to improper pleasantries, buffoonery, foolish talking, stupidity, and impurity (cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 148, a. 5 f.), spiritual gluttony, as St. John of the Cross points out *{The Dark Night,* Bk. I. chap. 6), has analogous effects in a less inferior order. It is, he says, very frequent in beginners: "Many beginners, delighting in the sweetness and joy of their spiritual occupations, strive after spiritual sweetness rather than after pure and true devotion." In order to procure sensible consolations they sometimes take upon themselves, contrary to obedience, indiscreet penances which ruin their health and wear them out. The devil deceives them in this. They are afflicted because their director does not approve of them, and are like children guided by their tastes and sensuality, and not their reason; they pay little heed to their wretchedness and lose sight of the fear of God. Consequently, they need to be weaned from these sensible consolations to which they are too greatly attached; their sensible appetites must be purged, purified that they may be apt for a true spiritual life incontestably dominated by the spirit.

True devotion is the promptness of the will in the service of God (cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.8z, a. 1); sensible devotion is accidental or accessory, useful only on condition that we do not attribute too much importance to it. The Lord deprives us of it in order to purify us if we take too great pleasure in it. "How," says St. John of the Cross *(ibid.),* "can one fail to understand that the least of the blessings of Eucharistic Communion is that which touches the senses, and that the invisible grace it confers is far greater; for God frequently withholds the sensible favors from men, that they may fix the eyes of faith upon I limsclf."

which attacks what is best in us, that is, the love of God, in order to disfigure and pervert it. There is nothing higher on earth than true mysticism, which is the eminent exercise of the loftiest virtue, charity, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which accompany it; on the other hand, there is nothing worse than false mysticism, than the false love of God and of our neighbor, which is true only in name and which resembles true mysticism as an imitation diamond does a real one.[16] St. John tells us: "Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits if they be of God." [17]

To avoid illusion, we need humility and purity of heart here. We may even say that all Christ's teaching on the mortification of sensuality is summed up in these words: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God."

But the Gospel insists strongly on another mortification, that of the irascible appetite, the other form of the inordinateness of the sensibility, which is divided, as we have seen, into the concupiscible appetite and the irascible appetite.

The Mortification of the Irascible Appetite

We read in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. . . . But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift. Be at

16 On this subject, St. John of the Cross *(The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 4) speaks of what he calls "spiritual luxury," that is, involuntary impure movements which are produced in beginners during affective prayer or the reception of the sacraments. Ordinarily these movements come from interior joy overflowing on the sensibility which is not yet sufficiently under control and purified. These rebellions, says the saint, also come occasionally from the devil, who wishes to disturb and trouble the soul in order to make it abandon spiritual exercises. He adds that fear of the return of these movements may become their cause, and that very delicate temperaments experience them under the influence of different emotions.

According to St. John of the Cross, these involuntary movements of sensuality are not sins as long as the will, far from consenting to them, resists them. They are an imperfection of beginners. But they must not be confused with indirectly voluntary movements of sensuality, which could come, for example, from too great familiarity that would distort a spiritual friendship.

17 See I John 4:1.

agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him." [18]

A little farther on, Christ says: "But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." [19] Acting thus, the Christian does not sharply defend his rights; he thinks more of his duties than of his rights, and often wins over to God the soul of his irritated brother, whom he calms by his patience and meekness. The saints acted in this way and often won to God the violent who opposed them.

In the same sermon Christ tells us: "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. . . For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? . . . Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." [20]

And, to be sure, if we truly acted in this way toward our adversaries (even exteriorly, where there are no superior interests to safeguard), we would most certainly reach sanctity, that supernatural perfection which is a participation, not alone of angelic life but of the inner life of God, a perfection which is of the same order as that of our Father in heaven.

To reach it we need the mortification of the irascible appetite which makes us acquire the virtue of meekness, not the effeminacy of temperament or the supineness of those who let everything go because they have no energy or because they are afraid to react, but the virtue of meekness, which is a great power to conquer ourselves, to possess our souls, to keep them calm, in the hand of God, and thus to do true good to those very persons who are irritated at us, to those who are like the broken reed that must not be completely crushed by answering them in the same irritated tone.

This mortification of the irascible appetite is so much the more necessary as the results of anger are more serious; for it leads to other sins, occasionally even to cursing and blasphemy.

On the other hand, meekness is the flower of charity and protects its fruits, for it makes counsels and even reproaches acceptable. A

[18] Matt. 5:21–25.
[19] *Ibid.,* 39 f.
[20] *Ibid.,* 44-48.

reproach given with great kindness is often well received, whereas when given with sharpness it produces no results. Thus Christ tells us: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."

At this point it is expedient to say something about the type of anger which is the "bitter zeal" mentioned by spiritual writers, especially St. John of the Cross, when dealing with the defects of beginners.[21]

Some, he says, become impatient as soon as they are deprived of consolations: "For when spiritual things minister to them no more sweetness and delight, they naturally become peevish, and in that bitterness of spirit prove a burden to themselves in all they do: trifles make them angry, and they are at times intolerable to all about them. . . . Their natural temper is soured and rendered morose. They are," says the saint, "like a babe weaned from the breast."[22] They also occasionally fall into spiritual sloth.

Or perhaps "they are angry with other people for their faults, with a sort of unquiet zeal, and watch them; they are occasionally moved to blame them, and even do so in anger, constituting themselves guardians of virtue. All this is contrary to spiritual meekness." And there is pride involved. They see the mote in their neighbor's eye and do not see the beam in their own.

"Others, again, seeing their own imperfections, become angry with themselves with an impatience that is not humble. These impatient people show that they expect to be saints in one day." St. John of the Cross says: "Many of these make many and grand resolutions, but, being self-confident and not humble, the more they resolve, the more they fall, and the more angry they become; not having the

[21] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. j.

[22] *Ibid.,* St. John of the Cross observes: "When this natural feeling of displeasure is not permitted to grow, there is no sin, but only imperfection, which will have to be purged away in the severity and aridities of the dark night." The Spanish text reads: "No hay *culpa,* sino *imperfecciôn."* This statement shows, like what was said in chapter 4 of certain involuntary movements of sensuality, that St. John of the Cross distinguished between imperfection and venial sin, which supposes at least negligence in repressing the disorder of the sensible appetites. For this disorder to be a sin, it must be voluntary, at least in an indirect manner, that is, it is at least necessary that a person could and should have foreseen it and prevented it. St. Thomas spoke in the same way (Ia Ilae, q.8o, a.3 ad jum): "The lusting of the flesh against the spirit, when the reason actually resists it, is not a sin, but is matter for the exercise of virtue." Cf. *ibid.,* Ila Ilae, q. 154, a.5; *De malo,* q.7, a.6 ad 6um.

patience to wait for God's time; this is also opposed to spiritual meekness. There is no perfect remedy for this but in the dark night," or the passive purification of the senses, of which w t shall speak farther on.

Finally, the saint remarks: "There are, however, some people who are so patient, and who advance so slowly in their spiritual progress, that God wishes they were not so patient."

The active purification of the sensible appetites or the mortification that we impose on ourselves must cause this double disorder of sensuality and irritability to disappear; but it cannot completely suppress it. To finish its work, there is needed a more profound purification, that which comes directly from God Himself, when he places the sensibility in a special and prolonged aridity in which He communicates to us a superior light—that of the gift of knowledge, knowledge of the vanity of all earthly things—which is not a sensible grace but an entirely spiritual grace. It is the passive purification of the senses of which we shall speak farther on. This purification is one of the forms of the salutary cross we must carry in order to reach the true life of the spirit, which dominates the senses and unites us to God.

CHAPTER XXV

The Active Purification of the Imagination and the Memory

"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."
Ecclus. 7:40

WHAT we have said of the active purification of the senses and of the sensible appetites has already demonstrated that exterior mortification is not the most important; yet he who neglects it will also neglect all interior mortification and end by losing completely the spirit of abnegation.

This loss would occur especially if a person deliberately wished no longer to trouble himself about mortification. He would thus fall, as frequently happens, into practical naturalism substituted for the spirit of faith, and finally he would no longer keep practically anything of Christ's precept: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." [1]

If anyone deliberately wishes to take as food all that is pleasing and always to be at his ease, without any spirit of Christian temperance, he no longer tends toward perfection and forgets the loftiness of the supreme precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." [2] A religious who acts in this manner loses sight of the special obligation of the religious life.

But the exterior mortification of the body and senses would be without great result if it were not accompanied by the interior mortification of the imagination and the memory, of which we are

[1] Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23.
[1] Luke 10:27.

going to speak, and by the active purification of the intellect and will, which we shall treat of next.

The Active Purification of the Imagination

The imagination is a faculty that is undeniably very useful to us, since the soul united to the body cannot think without images;[3] an image always accompanies the idea. This fact explains why Christ spoke to the multitudes in parables, that He might lift them gently from the sensible image to the spiritual idea of the kingdom of God; in like manner, to make the Samaritan woman understand the value of divine grace, He did not tell her about it in abstract terms, but used the figure of the "fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting."

But, to be useful, the imagination must be directed by right reason illumined by faith; otherwise it may become, as someone has said "the mad woman in the house." It diverts us from the consideration of divine things and inclines us toward vain, inconsistent, and fantastic, or even forbidden things. At the very least, it leads us to daydreaming that gives rise to sentimentality, which is opposed to true piety.

It is not always in our power, especially in periods of fatigue, to dispel at once vain or dangerous images; but, with the help of grace, we can will not to grant them the attention of the mind, and we can gradually diminish their number and their attraction. Even perfect souls continue to suffer certain involuntary ramblings of the imagination aroused occasionally by the devil, as St. Teresa points out in the fifth mansion and even in the sixth.[4] But, as the interior soul advances, it gradually frees itself from these wanderings of the fancy and ends by contemplating God and His infinite goodness, scarcely paying any attention to the images which accompany this act of penetrating and sweet faith. Thus we write with a pen without noticing its form, and frequently we converse with a person without paying any attention to the shape or color of his garments, unless there is something strange or unusual about them.

Consequently the imagination ceases little by little to trouble the exercise of the intellect, and finally is placed positively at its service

[3] Cf. St. Thomas, In, q.78, a.4; q.84, a. 7.

[4] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 4; sixth mansion, chap. 1.

that it may occasionally express in beautiful images those things that pertain to the interior life, somewhat as Christ expressed them in parables or in His conversations with Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman. These images ought, therefore, to be unimpassioned and discreet in order to draw attention not to themselves, but to the superior idea which they express. Then, as a well-born person wears a garment that is simple and in good taste without according it any more attention than is necessary, so the thought makes use of the figure without dwelling on it. The image is there only for the thought, and the thought only for the expression of truth.

But such a harmony of our faculties is not realized without true discipline of the imagination in order that it may cease to be the mad woman in the house and may truly be placed at the service of the intellect illumined by faith. In this way alone can we gradually re-establish the order that existed in the state of original justice, in which the superior part of the soul retained the direction of the imagination and the different emotions of the sensibility as long as it obeyed God whom it contemplated and loved above all.

According to these principles, we must brush aside at once dangerous images and memories, put away also useless reading and vain reveries that would make us lose precious time and might expose us to all sorts of illusions in which the enemy would make sport of us in order to ruin us.

To effect this discipline, we must apply ourselves to the duty of the moment *(age quod agis)* with a healthy realism, directing the accomplishment of this duty to God, who should be loved above all. Thus will our intellect and will gradually dominate our imagination and sensibility; and our obedient imagination will find in the beauties of the liturgy food for our interior life.

St. John of the Cross points out that true devotion is concerned with the spiritual and invisible object, represented by sensible images, without pausing at these, and that the nearer a soul draws to divine union, the less it depends on images.[5]

However, it is important at this point to speak more particularly of the mortification of the memory, which exposes us to live in the unreal and which only too often recalls to us what ought to be forgotten.

5 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chaps. 12, 34. Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. j ad 2Utn.

The Active Purification of the Memory

St. John of the Cross discusses this subject at length.[6] Here we are concerned at the same time with the sensible memory, which exists in animals, and the intellectual memory that is common to men and angels.[7] The intellectual memory is not a faculty really distinct from the intellect; it is the intellect in so far as it retains ideas.[8]

Why does our memory need to be purified? Because, since original sin and as a result of our repeated personal sins, it is full of useless and sometimes dangerous memories. In particular, we often recall the wrongs our neighbor has done us, the harsh words for which we have not yet completely pardoned him, although he himself may have keenly regretted them. We remember less the favors we have received from our neighbor than what we have had to suffer from him, and a harsh word often makes us forget all the kindnesses that have come to us from him in the course of several years. But the chief defect of our memory is what Scripture calls the proneness to forget God. Our memory, which is made to recall to us what is most important, often forgets the one thing necessary, which is above time and does not pass.

What St. John of the Cross says[9] about the necessity of the purification of the memory may seem exaggerated at first reading; but our impression changes if we read first of all what the Scriptures say on the subject.

6 *Ibid.,* Bk. III, chaps. 1-15. Chapter 15 sums up the preceding chapters.

7 St. Thomas, Ia, q.77, a.8; q.78, a.4; q.79, a.6 f.

8 St. Thomas (Ia, q.79, a.7) explains it well, for he says that the faculties are specified by their formal object, and that there is no difference between the formal object of the intellect (specified by intelligible being or the true) and the intellectual memory which retains ideas and judgment.

In the first objection stated in this seventh article, St. Thomas notes that St. Augustine (De *Trinitate,* Bk. X, chaps. 10 f.) "assigns to the soul memory, understanding, and will" and thereby seems to distinguish between them. Then he replies that St. Augustine, as is indicated in De *Trinitate,* Bk. XIV, chap. 7, understood by memory the soul's habit of retention; by intelligence, the act of the intellect; and by will, the act of the will.

In other words, St. Augustine takes the descriptive point of view of experimental psychology, ot of introspection (it is thus that St. John of the Cross speaks), whereas St. Thomas, as a metaphysician, takes the ontological point of view of the real distinction of the faculties according to their formal object. But such a distinction docs not exist between the intellect and the intellectual memory.

9 *Loe. cit.*

Scripture often speaks of man's proneness to forget God. Isaias writes: "Truth hath been forgotten: and he that departed from evil, lay open to be a prey. And the Lord saw, and it appeared evil in His eyes, because there is no judgment." [10]11

Jeremias, speaking in the name of God, says: "Will a virgin forget her ornament? . . . But My people hath forgotten Me days without number." [11] Recalling the mercies of God in regard to the people of Israel saved by Him in their passage through the Red Sea, the Psalmist writes: "They forgot His works. . . . They forgot God, who saved them, who had done great things." [12]*Several times Scripture adds that especially in tribulation we should recall the mercies of God and implore His aid.

If we forget God and do not appreciate His immense benefits, those of the redemptive Incarnation, the institution of the Holy Eucharist, daily Mass, we are guilty of ingratitude and lose the time of the present life which ought to tend toward eternal fife.

Proneness to forget God causes our memory to be as if immersed in time, whose relation to eternity, to the benefits and promises of God, it no longer sees. This defect inclines our memory to see all things horizontally on the line of time that flees, of which the present alone is real, between the past that is gone and the future that is not yet. Forgetfulness of God prevents us from seeing that the present moment is also on a vertical line which attaches it to the single instant of immobile eternity, and that there is a divine manner of living the present moment in order that by merit it may enter into eternity. Whereas forgetfulness of God leaves us in this banal and horizontal view of things on the line of time which passes, the contemplation of God is like a vertical view of things which pass and of their bond with God who does not pass. To be immersed in time, is to forget the value of time, that is to say, its relation to eternity.

By what virtue must this great defect of forgetfulness of God be cured? St. John of the Cross [18] answers that the memory which forgets God must be healed by the hope of eternal beatitude, as the

[10] Isa. 59:15.
[11] Jer. 2:32.
[12] Ps. 105:13, 21.
[18] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chaps. 6f. Hope, he says, is so much the greater as the memory is empty of notions of created things.

intellect must be purified by the progress of faith, and the will by the progress of charity.

This doctrine is based on numerous sayings of Holy Scripture relative to the remembrance of the benefits of God and His promises. The Psalmist often says: "In the day of my trouble I sought God. . . . I remembered the works of the Lord." [14] "I will be mindful of Thy justice alone." [15] "The proud did iniquitously altogether: but I declined not from Thy law. I remembered, O Lord, Thy judgments of old: and I was comforted." [16] We read in Ecclesiasticus also: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." [17]

Holy Scripture often says also that we must ceaselessly remember the divine promises, which are the foundation of our hope. The patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament lived by the promise of the Messias who was to come; and we should live daily more profoundly by the promise of eternal beatitude. It is one of the great recurrent themes in Holy Scripture.

On this point, as on so many others, *The Imitation of Christ* preserves admirably for us the spirit of St. Augustine, often using his very words.[18] This teaching helps us to understand clearly what St. John of the Cross wrote later. The author of *The Imitation* often treats of the purification of the memory in the passages where he speaks of the forgetfulness of all creatures in order to find the Creator,[19] of meditation on death,[20] of anxiety to be avoided about one's affairs,[21] of vain and worldly learning,[22] of the remembrance

[14] Ps. 76:3, 12.
[15] Ps. 70:*16.*
[16] Ps. 118:51 f.
[17] Ecclus. 7:40.
[18] *The Imitation* seems to have been written by a holy religious who culled from the works of St. Augustine what is most applicable to the interior life. It matters little whether we know the name of its author; this book somewhat resembles Melchisedech, a type of the Messias, of whom it is said that "he had neither father nor mother" because he belonged, so to speak, to a supratemporal order. Likewise, many sublime hymns of the liturgy bear the name of no author; the same is true of many famous melodies. Among anonymous writings, some are debasing, others sublime. There are two classes of people who hide themselves: the criminal who flees punishment, and the saint who through humility wishes to remain unknown.
[19] *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. III, chap. 31.
[20] *Ibid.,* Bk. I, chap. 23.
[21] *Ibid.,* Bk. III, chap. 39.
[22] *Ibid.,* chap. 43.

of the benefits of God,[23] of liberty of heart, which is acquired by prayer rather than by reading.[24]

We shall quote only the most characteristic passages which show how the purification of the memory prepares the soul for contemplation and union with God.

Of the contempt of everything created in order to find the Creator. For as long as any thing holds me back, I cannot freely fly to Thee. . . . And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth? A man ought, therefore, to soar above everything created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that Thou, the Creator of all, hast nothing like to Thee among creatures. And unless a man be disengaged from all things created (for their sake or for himself), he cannot freely attend to things divine. And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures. . . .[25]

Of the thoughts of death. Oh, the dullness and the hardness of the human heart, that dwelleth only upon things present, instead rather of providing for those which are to come! Thou shouldst so order thyself in every deed and thought as if thou wert immediately to die. . . . Now is the time very precious, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. . . . And man's life passeth away suddenly like a shadow. . . . Whilst thou hast time, amass for thyself immortal riches. Think of nothing but thy salvation; care only for the things of God. Make to thyself friends now, by venerating the saints of God and imitating their actions, that when thou shalt fail in this life they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings. Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, that hath no concern with the business of the world. Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, for thou hast not here a lasting city.[28]

We should not settle ourselves on earth; people do not settle themselves on the road, or go to sleep there, but rather use it as a means of advancing toward a given end.

That a man must not be too anxious about his affairs. Son, commit thy cause to Me always; I will dispose of it well in its due season. Await

[23] *Ibid.,* chap. 22.
[24] *Ibid.,* chap. 26.
[20] *Ibid.,* chap. 31.
[28] *Ibid.,* Bk. I, chap. 23.

My appointment, and thence thou shalt experience success therefrom. . . .[27]

Against vain and worldly learning. Son, let not the beautiful and subtle sayings of men affect thee; for the kingdom of God consisteth not in speech, but in virtue. Attend to My words, which inflame hearts and enlighten minds, which excite to compunction and afford manifold consolations. . . . When thou shalt have read and shalt know many things, thou must always revert to the one beginning. I am He who teacheth men knowledge, and who giveth a more clear understanding to little ones than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will quickly be wise and will profit greatly in spirit. Woe to them that inquire after many curious things of men, and are little curious of the way to serve Me. The time will come when Christ, the Master of masters, the Lord of Angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men, that is, to examine the conscience of every one. And then will He search Jerusalem with lamps, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the argument of tongues shall be silent. I am He that in an instant elevateth the humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth than if anyone had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honor, without strife of arguments. I am He who teacheth to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek the things eternal, to relish the things eternal, to fly honors, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in Me, to desire nothing out of Me, and above all things ardently to love Me. . . . I within am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Understander of thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing to everyone as I judge fitting. . . .[28]

Of the remembrance of the manifold benefits of God. Give me to understand Thy will, and to commemorate with great reverence and diligent consideration all Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that so henceforward I may be able worthily to return thanks for them. . . . All things that we have in soul and body . . . are Thy benefits. . . . He who hath received greater things, cannot glory of his own merit, nor extol himself above others, nor exult over the lesser. . . . For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world, for Thy familiar friends and domestics. . . .[20]

Of liberty of heart. Lord, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many

27 *Ibid.,* Bk. III, chap. 39.
28 *Ibid.,* chap. 43.
20 *Ibid.,* chap. 22.

cares to pass on as it were without care; not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, not cleaving with an inordinate affection to anything created.[80]

Here we have truly the purification of the memory, which prepares for the infused contemplation of the great mysteries of faith. On this contemplation of the purified and liberated soul, *The Imitation* says:

For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift it up above itself. And unless a man be elevated in spirit and freed from attachment to all creatures and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of no great importance.[81]

Is this not equivalent to saying that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God resulting from it are in the normal way of sanctity? *The Imitation* adds:

Whatsoever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing. There is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious cleric. Far more noble is that learning which flows from above from the divine influence than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man. Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practice those things which are required for its attainment. . . . From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.[32]

This teaching on the purification of the memory was particularly developed by St. John of the Cross, especially in relation to the remembrance of exceptional and so to speak exterior graces on which we must not dwell too much. The memory of them, accompanied by vain complacency, would turn us away from union with God. Hope lifts us up more to the love of God than experience of extraordinary graces. "What we have to do, then," says the holy doctor, "in order to live in the simple and perfect hope of God, whenever these forms, knowledge, and distinct images occur, is, not to fix our minds upon them but to turn immediately to God, emptying the memory of all such matters, in loving affection, with-

[80] *Ibid.,* chap. *16.*
[81] *Ibid.,* chap. 31.
[81] *Ibid.*

out regarding or considering them more than suffices to enable us to understand and perform our obligations, if they have any reference thereto." 33

Here we have truly the active purification of the memory which is too preoccupied with useless or dangerous memories. We should put this teaching into practice that our memory may no longer be, so to speak, immersed in ephemeral things, that it may no longer see them only on the horizontal line of fleeting time, but on the vertical line which attaches them to the single instant of immobile eternity. Thus, little by little the soul rises often to the thought of God, recalling the great benefits of the redemptive Incarnation and the Holy

83 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chap. 14. On this subject we must recall what St. John of the Cross says in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chap, i *passim:* "When the reader observes that I teach the annihilation of these powers in the matter of their operations, he will perhaps imagine that I am destroying and not building up the spiritual edifice. This objection would be valid if my purpose here were to instruct only beginners, who are to be led onwards by means of these discursive and tangible apprehensions. But as I am teaching how to advance by contemplation to the divine union,—for which end all these means, and the sensible exertion of the powers of the soul must cease and be silent, in order that God in His own way may bring that union to pass—it is necessary to release the faculties and to empty them, and to make them renounce their natural jurisdiction and operations, that the supernatural may fill and enlighten them; seeing that their powers cannot compass so great a matter, but rather, unless suppressed, prove a difficulty in the way. . . .

"You will, perhaps, object and say: All this is very well, but the principle involves the destruction of the natural use and course of our faculties. . . . Surely God does not destroy nature, but rather perfects it; but its destruction is the natural issue of this doctrine. . . .

"To this I reply: The more the memory is united to God the more it loses all distinct knowledge, and at last all such fades utterly away when the state of perfection is reached. In the beginning, when this is going on, great forgetfulness ensues, for these forms and knowledge fall into oblivion, men neglect themselves in outward things, forgetting to eat or drink; . . . and all this because the memory is lost in God. But he who has attained to the habit of union does not forget in this way that which relates to moral and natural reason; he performs in much greater perfection all necessary and befitting actions, though by the ministry of forms and knowledge in the memory, supplied in a special manner by God. . . . The operations of the memory, therefore, and of the other powers in this state are, as it were, divine. . . . Therefore the operations of the soul in the state of union are the operations of the Holy Ghost, and consequently, divine." The soul is then clearly under the regime of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the special inspirations of the Holy Ghost incline it to the superior acts of the infused virtues which rhe gifts accompany. "The actions and the prayers of such souls," says St. John of rhe Cross *(ibid.),* "always attain their end."

Eucharist. Often, on the contrary, we enter a church to ask for some urgent grace, and we forget to thank God for the measureless blessing of the Eucharist. Its institution demands a special thanksgiving; this sacrament reminds us of the promises of eternal life.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Active Purification of the Intellect

"If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome."
Matt. 6:22

THE superior faculties of man, which he has in common with the angels, are the intellect and will. They, too, need to be purified and disciplined, for they suffer from a disorder which is the consequence of original sin and of our personal sins.

The first gaze of the intellect of the baptized infant is simple; the same is true of a soul that begins to respond generously to a higher vocation. But it may happen that in time this gaze loses its simplicity through the complexity of the things it examines with a heart that is more or less pure. Then a serious purification is needed in order to recover the first simplicity of the intellect by a profound view which dominates the details and inevitable griefs, in order to embrace life as a whole. Happy the old people who after long experience and many trials reach this superior simplicity of true wisdom, which they had glimpsed from a distance in their childhood! With this meaning it can be said that a beautiful life is a thought of youth realized in maturity.

We shall discuss here: (1) the necessity of the active purification of the intellect because of the defects found in it; (2) the active principle of this purification and what must be put into practice on this point.

The Necessity of This Purification: the Defects of Our Intellect

Since rhe commission of original sin, man's intellect is wounded. This wound is called that of ignorance;[1] because of it, the intellect,

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, la IIae, q.85, a. 3.

instead of inclining spontaneously toward the true, and especially toward supreme Truth, has difficulty in attaining it and tends to become absorbed in the consideration of earthly things without rising to their cause. It is inclined with curiosity toward ephemeral things and, on the other hand, it is negligent and slothful in the search for our true last end and the means leading to it. Consequently the intellect easily falls into error, lets itself be darkened by the prejudices which come from inordinate passions. It may finally reach the state that is called spiritual blindness.

Doubtless, original sin did not render our intellect incapable of knowing the truth, as the first Protestants and the Jansenists held. By patient effort, it can even acquire, without the help of revelation, the knowledge of a certain number of fundamental truths of the natural order, such as the existence of God, Author of the natural moral law. But, as the Council of the Vatican declares,[2] in the terms St. Thomas used,[3] few men are capable of this labor, and they reach this result only after a considerable length of time, without succeeding in freeing themselves from all error.

It is also true that this wound of ignorance, the consequence of original sin, is in the process of healing from the time of baptism, which regenerates us by giving us sanctifying grace. This wound may, however, reopen by reason of our personal sins, especially by reason of curiosity and intellectual pride, of which we must speak here.

Curiosity is a defect of our mind, says St. Thomas,[4] which inclines us with eagerness and precipitation toward the consideration and study of less useful subjects, making us neglect the things of God and of our salvation. This curiosity, says the holy doctor,[5] is born of spiritual sloth in respect to divine things, and makes us lose precious time. Whereas people who have little learning but are nourished with the Gospel possess great rectitude of judgment, there are others who, far from nourishing themselves profoundly with the great Christian truths, spend a great part of their time carefully storing up useless, or at least only slightly useful, knowledge which

2Denzinger, no. 1786. It is said here that it is thanks to divine revelation that the natural truths of religion can be known by all, quickly, with a firm certitude, and without any admixture of errors.

3 See Ia, q. 1, a. 1.

4 *Cf.* Ha Ilae, q. 167, a. 1.

6 *Ibid.,* q. 35, a.4 ad 311m.

does not at all form the judgment. They are afflicted with almost a mania for collecting. Theirs is an accumulation of knowledge mechanically arranged and unorganized, somewhat as if it were in a dictionary. This type of work, instead of training the mind, smothers it, as too much wood smothers a fire. Under this jumble of accumulated knowledge, they can no longer see the light of the first principles, which alone could bring order out of all this material and lift up their souls even to God, the Beginning and End of all things.[6]

This heavy and stupid intellectual curiosity, as St. John of the Cross says, is in this sense the inverse of contemplation, which judges all things by the supreme cause. Such curiosity could lead to spiritual folly of which St. Paul often speaks,[7] to the folly which judges all, even the highest things, by what is lowest and at times most contemptible, by the satisfactions of our concupiscence or of our pride.

Spiritual pride is a more serious disorder than curiosity. It gives us such confidence in our reason and judgment that we are not very willing to consult others, especially our superiors, or to enlighten ourselves by the attentive and benevolent examination of reasons or facts which may be urged against us. This state of mind leads to manifest imprudent acts that will have to be painfully expiated. It leads also to asperity in discussions, to stubbornness in judgment, to

6 St. Thomas, *In Epist. I Cor.* 8:1, where he discusses the words, "Knowledge puffeth up," writes: "Here the Apostle does not approve of much knowledge, if the mode of knowing is ignored. Moreover, the mode of knowing is that you should know in what order, with what eagerness, to what end each thing must be known: in what order, that you should know first that which is more proper for salvation; with what eagerness, that you should seek with greater ardor that which is more efficacious to inflame love; to what end, that you should not wish to know anything for vainglory and curiosity, but for your own and your neighbor's edification."

See also Ila Ilae, q. 166, On the Virtue of Studiousness. St. Thomas discusses here the virtue of studiousness which represses both vain curiosity and intellectual sloth in order to lead people to the study of what should be studied, in the manner in which this should be done, when it should be done, and for a moral and supernatural end.

Cf. also, Ila Ilae, q. 188, a.5 ad jum, On the Studies Which Are Suitable for Religious. They should study sacred science: "It becomes not religious, whose whole life is devoted to the service of God, to seek for other learning, except so far as it is referred to the sacred doctrine."

7 Cf. I Cor. 3:19: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.46, On Folly. The saint shows that it is opposed to the gift of wisdom, that it is a sin, and that it is born especially of lust.

disparagement which excludes in a cutting tone all that does not fit in with our manner of seeing things. This pride may lead a person to refuse to others the liberty he claims for his own opinions, and also to submit only very imperfectly to the directions of the supreme Shepherd, and even to attenuate and minimize dogmas under the pretext of explaining them better than has been done hitherto.[8]

These defects, especially pride, may finally lead us to spiritual blindness, which is the direct opposite of the contemplation of divine things. It is necessary to insist on this point, as St. Thomas did,[9] after he treated of the gift of understanding.

Holy Scripture often speaks of this spiritual blindness. Christ was saddened and angered by the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees,[10][11] and finally said to them: "Woe to you blind guides. . . . You tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and faith. . . . Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel." [11]

In St. John's Gospel[12] we read that this blindness is a punishment of God, who withdraws light from such as do not wish to receive it.[13]

There are sinners who, by reason of repeated sins, no longer recognize the signified will of God manifested in a striking manner; they no longer understand that the evils which befall them are punishments of God, and they do not turn to Him. By natural laws alone, they explain these misfortunes as things that afflict a number of people at the moment. They see in them only the result of certain economic factors, such as the development of machinery and overproduction which results from it. They no longer take into account

8 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 138, where St. Thomas speaks of the dangers of obstinacy in a person's own judgment, when he is no longer willing to listen to authorized counsels given to him.

Pertinacity is found sometimes in certain spiritual people who go astray. They have zeal, but it is a bitter zeal; they are no longer willing to listen to the wise advice given them, and they wish to impose their judgment on everyone as if they alone had the Holy Ghost. They are inflated with spiritual pride, they fail in charity under the pretext of reforming everything about them; they may become the enemies of peace and provoke profound discord. St. John of the Cross, deploring these errors, used to say: "Where there is not enough love, put love there, and you will reap love."

9 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 15.

10 Mark 3:5.

11 Matt. 23:16, 23 f.

12 John 12:40.

13 Rom. 11:8.

that these disorders have above all a moral cause and come from the fact that many men place their last end where it is not; not in God who would unite us, but in material goods which divide us, because they cannot belong simultaneously and integrally to a number.

Spiritual blindness leads the sinner to prefer in everything goods that are temporal rather than eternal goods. It prevents him from hearing the voice of God, which the Church recalls in the liturgy for Advent and for Lent: "Be converted to Me with all your heart. . . . Turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil." [14]

Spiritual blindness is a punishment of God which takes away the divine light because of repeated sins. But there is also a sin by which we voluntarily turn away from the consideration of divine truth by preferring to it the knowledge of that which satisfies our concupiscence of our pride.[15]

We may say of this sin what St. Thomas says of spiritual folly *{stultitia'),* that it is opposed to the precepts of the contemplation of truth.[16] It hinders us from seeing the proximity of death and the judgment.[17] It takes all penetration away from us and leaves us in a state of spiritual dullness, which is like the loss of all higher intelligence.[18] Then we no longer see the grandeur of the supreme precept of the love of God and of our neighbor, or the value of our Savior's blood shed for us, or the infinite value of the Mass, which substantially perpetuates on the altar the sacrifice of the cross.

Such a condition is a chastisement, and no heed is paid to it. As St. Augustine says: "If, when a thief stole money, he lost an eye, everybody would say that it was a punishment of God; you have lost the eye of your mind and you think that God has not punished you." [18] '

It is surprising at times to find among Christians men who have great literary, artistic, or scientific culture, but who have merely a rudimentary and superficial knowledge of the truths of religion, a

14 Joel *2:12 f.*

15 Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 15, a. 1.

'•Cf. *ibid.,* q.46, a.2 ad jum: "Folly is opposed to the precepts, which are given by the contemplation of truth."

" *The Imitation,* Bk. 1, chap. 23.

*· Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 15, a. 3.

*I*0 *In Pt.* ^7.

knowledge mingled with many prejudices and errors. It is a surprising disproportion, which makes them, as it were, spiritual dwarfs.

Some others, better instructed in matters of faith, the history of the Church, and its laws, have a tendency that is, so to speak, anti-contemplative, permitting them to see the life of the Church only from without, as if they were looking at the exterior of the windows of a cathedral, instead of seeing them from within under the soft light which should illumine them.

This dullness of mind especially hinders the hearing of the great preaching of God, who speaks in His own way through great contemporary events. At the present time, there are in the world two radically contradictory universal tendencies, over and above the nationalism of different groups more or less opposed to one another. On the one hand, we find the universalism of the reign of Christ who wishes to draw the souls of men of all nations to God, supreme Truth and Life; on the other hand, we see false universalism, which is called communism, which draws souls in an inverse sense toward materialism, sensualism, and pride, in such a manner that the parable of the prodigal son is verified not only for individuals, but for whole nations, such as Russia.

The great problem of today is found in the conflict between the universalism of the reign of Christ and of the Church, which liberates souls, and communism, which leads them to materialist abjection and to the oppression of the weak under the pride of demagogues and leaders.[20]

[20] Jacques Maritain in his book, *Le Docteur Angélique* (1929, p. in), says: "How can we reconcile two apparently contradictory facts: the fact that modern history seems to enter on a new Middle Age, in which the unity and universality of Christian culture will be found again and extended this time to the entire universe, and the fact that the general trend of modern civilization seems to draw it toward the universalism of Antichrist and his rod of iron rather than toward the universalism of Christ and His liberating law, and in any event to forbid the hope of the unification of the world in one universal Christian 'empire'?

"My answer is as follows: I think that two immanent movements cross at every point in the world's history and affect each of its momentary complexes. One of these movements draws on high everything in the world which shares in the divine life of the Church, which is in the world but not of the world, and follows the attraction of Christ, the head of the human race.

"The other movement draws downward everything in the world which belongs to the prince of this world, the head of all the wicked. While undergoing these two internal movements, history advances in time. Thus human affairs arc subjected to an ever stronger distention until the material finally

In this conflict we must turn to prayer and penance, no less than to study and apostolic work. This is what the Blessed Virgin declared at Lourdes: "Pray and do penance."

Such are the defects of the mind which exist in us in various degrees: curiosity, rash haste to learn what is useless, indifference, negligence in regard to the one thing necessary (i.e., God and our salvation); spiritual pride, blindness, and spiritual folly, which ends by judging everything by what is lowest and most petty, whereas wisdom judges everything by the supreme cause and the last end.

How remedy this disorder, from which we all suffer in a greater or lesser degree?

The Principle of the Active Purification of the Intellect

This purification must be made by the progress of the virtue of faith, as the purification of the memory, immersed in time, is made by the growth of the hope of eternal beatitude.

St. Thomas tells us: "To detach itself from transient things and to tend toward God, the rational creature must first of all have faith in God: faith is the first principle of the purification of the heart in order to free us from error, and faith quickened by charity perfects this purification." [21] The intellect, which directs the will, must itself be thus purified;[22] otherwise the root of the will would be corrupted or deflected, mingled with error.

This purification is accomplished by judging more and more according to the spirit of faith. As Cajetan [23] remarks, faith leads us

snaps. Thus the cockle grows with the wheat; the capital of sin grows throughout the course of history and the capital of grace also increases and superabounds. . . . Christian heroism will one day become the only solution for the problems of life. Then as God proportions His graces to needs, and never tempts anyone beyond his strength, a flowering of sanctity will without doubt be seen to coincide with the worst state of human history." The Gospel of St. Matthew (24:24) declares: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect"; and in the Apocalypse (chap. 12) we are told that the elect will be preserved during the great tribulation. Cf. E. B. Allo, O.P., *L'Apocalypse de saint Jean* (Paris, 1921), pp. 145 ff. The greatest effort of evil seems to have to coincide with the last triumph of Christ, as happened during His life on earth.

Sec IIa Ilae, q.7, a. 2.

[22] *Ibid.,* ad iu iii.

[22] *hi Ham Ilae,* q.45, a. 2, no. 3.

first of all to adhere to revealed truths because of the authority of God who reveals them; then it leads us to consider and to judge all things according to these truths. This is true even of him who, in the state of mortal sin, has kept faith by which he is preserved from graver sins, such as theft and murder; and by reason of faith he judges that he must go to Mass and not refuse to listen to the word of God. These various judgments may be made without the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are not in a man in mortal sin; but without the gifts these judgments do not have all the perfection they should. In the just man they receive this perfection from the gifts; then they are produced in a different manner, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Thus the gift of wisdom leads us to judge according to a certain connaturality or sympathy with divine things. This is the opinion of Cajetan, and many theologians adopt almost the same terms.

Not only must we adhere firmly to the truths of faith, but according to them we must judge what we are to think, say, do, or avoid in life. Then we judge according to the spirit of faith, and not according to the spirit of nature or practical naturalism.

St. John of the Cross tells us that obscure faith enlightens us.[24] It is obscure because it makes us adhere to mysteries we do not see; but these mysteries, which are those of the inner life of God, greatly illumine our intellect, since they do not cease to express to us the goodness of God, who created us, raised us to the life of grace, sent His only Son to redeem us, His Son who gives Himself to us in the Eucharist in order to lead us to eternal life.

Faith is obscure, but it illumines our intellect in our journey toward eternity. It is very superior to the senses and to reason; it is the proximate means of union with God, whom it makes us know infallibly and supernaturally in obscurity.[25]

Faith is very superior to all the sensible and intellectual evidences that can be had on earth. What is evident for our senses, is sensible, not spiritual; therefore it is not God Himself. What is evident for our reason, is what is proportioned to it; at times this is a truth about God, His existence, for example, but it is not the inner life

[24] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 11; Faith is a dark night for the soul.

[25] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 3: The soul must remain in the obscurity of faith which will guide it to the highest contemplation. *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 9: "Faith is the sole proximate and proportionate means of the soul's union with God."

of God, which surpasses our reason and even the natural powers of the angelic intellect.

To see the intimate life of God, a person would have to die and receive the beatific vision. Now, faith makes us attain here on earth this inner life of God in the penumbra, in obscurity. Consequently a man who would prefer visions to infused faith would deceive himself, even if these visions were of divine origin, for he would prefer what is superficial and exterior, what is accessible to our faculties, to what surpasses them. He would prefer the figures to the divine reality. He would lose the meaning of the mystery; he would forsake true contemplation by withdrawing from this divine obscurity.[20]

Obscure faith enlightens us somewhat like the night, which, though surrounding us with shadows, allows us to see the stars, and by them the depths of the firmament. There is here a mingling of light and shade which is extremely beautiful. That we may see the stars, the sun must hide, night must begin. Amazingly, in the obscurity of night we see to a far greater distance than in the day; we see even the distant stars, which reveal to us the immense expanse of the heavens.

In the same way, the senses and reason allow us to see only what belongs to the natural order, only what is within their reach, whereas faith, although obscure, opens up to us the supernatural world and its infinite depths, the kingdom of God, His inner life, which we shall see unveiled and clearly in eternity.

Sr. John of the Cross reiterates this teaching, which is like a commentary on the definition of faith given by St. Paul,[27] a definition which St. Thomas sums up by saying: "Faith is a habit of the mind whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent," since it makes us adhere to the mystery of the inner life of God which we shall see in eternity.[28]

It follows that, to live by faith, we should consider everything under its light: God, first of all, then ourselves, others, friends or strangers, and all agreeable or painful events. We should see them not only from the sensible, but also from the rational point of view,

20 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 22; chaps. 10,11, 16.

27 Heb. 11:1: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." "Faith gives us the substance, or rather is itself that of which the reality does not yet appear," says St. John Chrysostom.

28 See Ha Ilae, η.φ,β.ι; *De veritate,* q. 14, a.2: "Faith is in us a certain beginning of eternal life."

from the supernatural point of view of faith, which would be equivalent to considering all things, so to speak, with the eye of God, or somewhat as God sees them.[29] Whence the manifest necessity of purifying our mind of curiosity, by no longer preferring the study of the secondary, of the subordinate, and sometimes of what is useless to the attentive meditation of the one thing necessary, to the reading of the Gospel and of all that can truly nourish the soul.[30] This necessity of the supernatural point of view shows the importance of spiritual reading together with study and distinct from it.

Consequently it is of prime importance not to devour books in order to appear well informed and to be able to talk about them, but to read what is suitable to the life of the soul, in a spirit of humility in order to be penetrated with it, to put it into practice, and to do real good to others.[31] We may recall with profit what St. Paul says (Rom. 12:3): "For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behooveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety."[32]

20 Cf. St. Thomas, *In Boetium de Trinitate,* q. j, a. 1 ad 4.

30 We read in Bk. I, chap. 5 of *The Imitation:* "All holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written. . . . Inquire not who may have said a thing, but consider what is said. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord abideth forever. God speaketh to us in divers ways, without respect of persons. Our curiosity is often a hindrance to us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and to discuss where we ought to pass on in simplicity. If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, and with faith; and never wish to have the name of learning. Be fond of inquiring and listen in silence to the words of the saints; and let not the parables of the ancients be displeasing to thee, for they are not uttered without a cause."

31 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 167, a. 1. See also *ibid.,* q. 166, on the moral virtue of studiousness or application to study in order to correct the contrary and at times successive deviations of curiosity and intellectual sloth. Once curiosity is satisfied, it often gives place to intellectual sloth in a person who has not the virtue of studiousness, which orders study not only to our personal satisfaction, but to God and to the good of souls.

32 St. Thomas, *In Epist. I Cor.* 8:1, explains the words of St. Paul, "Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth," by saying: "Knowledge, if alone and without charity, puffs one up with pride. Add charity to knowledge, then knowledge will be useful." Then he recalls what St. Bernard says: "There are those who wish to know for the purpose of knowing a great deal, and this is curiosity; some that they may know, and this is vanity; some that they may sell their knowledge, and this is base gain; some that they may be edified, and this is prudence; some that they may edify, and this is charity."

Therefore we must avoid rash haste in judgment, for this haste is the source of many errors.[33] We must even more avoid tenacity [34] in our own judgment, and correct this defect by docility to the directions of the Church, to those of our spiritual director, and also to the Holy Spirit, who wishes to be our interior Master that He may make us live increasingly the life of faith and give us in it a foretaste of the life of heaven.

If we followed this rule, the consideration of details would np longer make us lose sight of the whole, as so often happens, just as trees seen too near hinder one from seeing the forest. Those who say that the problem of evil cannot be solved and find in it an occasion of sin, are absorbed in the woeful verification of certain painful details and lose the general view of the providential plan in which everything is ordained to the good of those who love the Lord.

The excessively meticulous study of details makes us depreciate the first global view of things; when the latter is pure, however, it is already elevated and salutary. Thus when a Christian child sees the starry sky, he finds in it a splendid sign of the infinite grandeur of God. Later on, if he becomes absorbed in the scientific study of the different constellations, he may forget the view of the whole, to which the intellect must finally return the better to comprehend its loftiness and profundity. It has been said that if a little learning withdraws a person from religion, great learning brings him back to it.[35]

[33] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 53, a. 3.

[34] *Ibid.,* q. 138.

[35] Much could be said about the first intellectual gaze and its profound view, whether in the natural order or in the order of supernatural faith. The first gaze may lead into error if its object is something accidental and not the proper object of the intellectual faculty; it is quite otherwise if the object corresponds to the nature of the intellect. There are two simple beings: the child who does not yet know evil; and the sanctified old man who has forgotten it by dint of conquering it. Therefore the old man loves the child and is loved by it.

The intelligible being of sensible things and truth in general are the object of the first natural gaze of the human intellect; without this gaze, all knowledge and all philosophy would be impossible. Metaphysics is the profound view of intelligible being which permits man to rise in an absolutely certain manner to God, first Being, supreme Cause, and last End. Likewise all ethics proceed from this first gaze: "We must do good and avoid evil."

The first gaze in the order of supernatural faith is that which we see in the patriarchs of the Old Testament; they believe that God is and that He is

Likewise the great supernatural facts which are produced by God to enlighten the simple and to save them, such as the fact of Lourdes, are rather easily grasped by the clean of heart. They quickly see the supernatural origin, meaning, and import of these facts. If this simple, and at the same time superior, point of view is forgotten because of absorption in the study of details considered from the material point of view, only an undecipherable enigma may be found in it, and at times only something impossible to see through. Then, while learned men discourse endlessly without being able to reach a conclusion, God does His work in the clean of heart. Finally, more profound learning, accompanied by humility, leads back to the original view of the whole in order to confirm it, and to recognize the action of God and the profound good done to souls. Thus, after a life consecrated to the study of philosophy and theology, the soul delights in returning to the simplicity of faith of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the words of the psalms, to the parables of the Gospel. It is the purification of the intellect which prepares for contemplation.

the supreme rewarder (Heb. 11:6), and in this case God is considered not only as the Author of nature, but as the Author of salvation.

Likewise the first supernatural gaze, at the time of the coming of our Savior, after the Sermon on the Mount, is expressed in these words of St. Matthew (7:28 f.): "When Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees," who recapitulated the texts. The first gaze is again that of a child at Christmas before the Savior's crib. The profound view is that of a contemplative at the end of his life, that of a St. John, a St. Augustine, a St. Thomas, a St. John of the Cross.

In the case of a religious also, the first simple and penetrating gaze is that which he has when he hears the call of God in his youth; this simple gaze is often more elevated than many of the complications that will come later. Blessed are they who find it again later on in a profound view, the view of wisdom on all of life.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Active Purification of the Will

"For Thou art God my strength."
Ps. 42:2

WE HAVE seen that the intellect must be purified not only from error, ignorance, willfulness, and spiritual blindness, but also from curiosity, which gives too much importance to what is secondary and not enough to what is primary, when the work of the intellect should be directed to God, our last end, and to the good of souls. We must now speak of the purification and training of the will.

The will or rational appetite, which is very superior to the sensitive appetite, is a faculty which tends toward the good known through the intellect; it has for its object the universal good, which permits it to rise to the love of God, the sovereign Good.[1] Whereas each of the other faculties is inclined to its own good—the sight to what is visible, the intellect to the intelligible true—the will is inclined to the good of the entire man. This explains why it applies the other faculties to the exercise of their acts, for example, the intellect to the search for the true. This is also why, if the will is fundamentally upright, a man is good; he is not only a good mathematician or a good physician, he is a man of good or, as the Gospel says, "a man of good will." On the contrary, if the will has not the desired rectitude, if it is not inclined toward the true good of the entire man, he may be a good logician, a good painter, or a good musician, but he is not a man of good; he is an egoist, whose virtues, more apparent than real, are inspired by pride, ambition, or the fear of difficulties and vexations.

Thus free will gives not only to its own (or elicited) acts, but also

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, Ia, q.8o, a. I f.

to the acts of the other faculties which it commands (commanded acts), their liberty and their merit or demerit. Therefore, to regulate the will is to regulate the entire man. But in the will there are defects, deviations, which are the result of original sin and of our personal sins.

The Principal Defect of the Will: Self-Love

The strength of the will to move itself and to incline the other faculties to act comes from its docility to God, from its conformity to the divine will, because then, by grace, the divine strength passes into it. This is the great principle dominating this whole question.

All the meaning and the bearing of this principle are seen when we recall that, in the state of original justice, as long as the will was subject to God through love and obedience, it had the strength to command the passions completely and to reject every disorder of the sensible faculties; the passions were then totally subjected to the will vivified by charity.[2]

Since original sin, we are born without sanctifying grace and charity, with our wills turned away from God, the supernatural last end, and weak for the accomplishment of our duties even in the natural order.[3]

Without falling into the exaggeration of the first Protestants and the Jansenists, we must say that we are born with a will inclined to egoism, to inordinate self-love. This is called the wound of malice;[4] it often manifests itself by a gross egoism, against which one should guard, an egoism that mingles in all man's acts. It follows that the will, which has become weak by reason of its lack of docility to God, no longer has absolute power over the sensible faculties, but only a sort of moral power or persuasion to lead them to subject themselves.[5] Doubtless after baptism, which regenerated us by giving

2 *Ibid.,* q.95, a. 2.

3 Cf. la Ilae, q. 109, a. 3 f. The will, which is directly turned away from the supernatural last end, is indirectly turned away from the natural last end, for every sin against the supernatural law is indirectly opposed to the natural law, which obliges us to obey God, whatever He may command.

4 *Ibid.,* q.85, a.3: "In so far as the will is deprived of its order to the good, there is the wound of malice."

5 *ibid.,* q. 17, a. 7: "Reason governs the irascible and concupiscible not by a despotic supremacy, which is that of a master over his slave; but by a politic and royal supremacy, whereby the free arc governed, who arc not wholly subject to command."

us sanctifying grace and charity, this wound, like the others, is in the process of healing; but it also reopens by reason of our personal sins.

The principal defect of the will is the lack of rectitude, called self-love or inordinate love of self, which forgets the love due to God and that which we should have for our neighbor. Self-love or egoism is manifestly the source of all sins.[6] From it are born "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." [7] The sensible appetites, which are no longer firmly led, incline man to thoughtlessness, feverish eagerness, fruitless agitation, selfish search for all that pleases, flight from all that is painful, nonchalance, discouragement, in which he sees that his will has lost its strength, and to all sorts of bad examples.*

It is clear that self-will, which is defined as that which is not conformed to the will of God, is the source of every sin. Self-will is extremely dangerous because it can corrupt everything; even what is best in one may become evil when self-will enters in, for it takes itself as its end, instead of subordinating itself to God. If the Lord perceives this will in a fast or a sacrifice, He rejects them because He sees therein a divine work accomplished through pride in order to gain approbation. Now, self-will is born of self-love or egoism; it is strong self-love that has become imperious.

On the subject of self-love or egoism, we may fall into two opposing errors: utilitarianism and quietism. Theoretical or practical utilitarianism does not see an evil in egoism, but a power that should be moderated. This doctrine, which reduces virtue to a business transaction, suppresses all morality; it reduces praiseworthy good to the useful and the delectable. This good, the object of virtue and duty, ought to be loved for itself and more than ourselves, independently of the advantages or the pleasure that may result therefrom: "Do what you ought, come what may." Practical utilitarianism

6 *Ibid.,* q.77, a.4: "Inordinate love of self is the cause of every sin."
7 *Ibid.,* a.5.

* These are like diseases of the will, but not diseases properly so called, as certain materialist doctors believe when they talk about abulia. The will is a faculty of the spiritual or immaterial order; it is not the seat of diseases like those which effect our organism, for example, the nervous centers. But certain diseases of these centers render the exercise of the will much more difficult, just as others suppress the condition required by the imagination for the exercise of reason and bring in their wake mental confusion or "fixed ideas" and madness.

leads to pride, which inclines a person to make himself the center of all who live about him; it is the manifest or hidden pride of the desire to dominate.

On the other hand, quietism [9] condemned all interested love, even that of our eternal reward, as if there were a disorder in Christian hope, from the fact that it is less perfect than charity.[10] Under the pretext of absolute disinterestedness, many quietists fell into spiritual sloth, which is indifferent to sanctification and salvation.[11]

The thought of salvation and eternal beatitude is evidently very useful that we may strive to put to death inordinate love of self, which is the principal defect of our will. It is of this love that St. Augustine wrote: "Two loves have built two cities: the love of self even to the despising of God, the city of the earth; the love of God even to the despising of self, the city of God. One glorifies

8 Cf. Denzinger, no. 1226: "The soul ought not to think of a reward, of paradise, or of hell, or of death, or of eternity, etc. . . ." Cf. *ibid.,* nos. 1232,

10 This teaching constituted a poor understanding of the act of Christian hope; by it we do not subordinate God to ourselves, but we desire God for ourselves by subordinating ourselves to Him, for He is the ultimate End of the act of hope. As Cajetan clearly points out *(In Ham Ilae,* q. 17, a. 5, no. 6): "I desire God for myself *(finaliter),* for God's sake, and not for my own sake; whereas when it is a question of things inferior to me, such as a fruit, I desire them for my own and for myself, I subordinate them to myself as to an end. On the contrary, by the act of hope I already subordinate myself to God (the last End of this act). This subordination becomes more perfect through charity, which makes me efficaciously love God formally for Himself and more than myself, by making me will His glory and the extension of His kingdom."

11 St. Thomas (IIa line, q. 19, a.6) clearly distinguishes between self-love which is blamable and that which is not. "Self-love," he says, "may stand in a threefold relationship to charity. In one way, it is contrary to charity, when a man places his end in the love of his own good (preferred to God). In another way, it is included in charity, when a man loves himself for the sake of God and in God (in order to glorify God here on earth and in eternity). In a third way, it is indeed distinct from charity, but is not contrary thereto, as when a man loves himself from the point of view of his own good, yet not so as to place his end in this his own good": for example, if we love ourselves naturally without thereby turning away from God or disobeying His law.

It must be remembered that, according to St. Thomas (la, q.6o, a.5), every creature is naturally inclined to love more than himself the Author of his nature (i.e., God), who keeps it in existence, just as in our organism the hand spontaneously exposes itself for the sake of the whole. But this natural inclination to love God more than self is attenuated in man by original sin and by his personal sins.

itself in self, and the other in the Lord. One seeks its glory from men, the other places its dearest glory in God, the witness of its conscience. The one in the pride of its glory walks with head high; the other says to its God: 'Thou art my glory, and it is Thou who dost lift up my head.' The former in its victories lets itself be conquered by its passion to dominate; the latter shows us its citizens united in charity, mutual servants, tutelary governors, obedient subjects. The former loves its own strength in its princes; the latter says to God: 'Lord, Thou art my only strength, I shall love Thee.' " [12] One would never weary of quoting St. Augustine.

A great purification and Christian training of the will are necessary to obliterate all inordinate self-love; this result is produced in us by the progress of charity, which "unites man to God so that he lives not for himself, but for God." [13]

Egoism is like a cancer of the will, which ravages it more and more, whereas sanctifying grace should be in it like a strong root which buries itself ever deeper in the soil in order to draw therefrom nourishing secretions and transform them into fruitful sap. We should think of the value of habitual grace, called the "grace of the virtues and the gifts," because of various proximate principles of meritorious acts springing from it. We would do well to consider that our will should possess a high degree of the virtues of justice, penance, religion, hope, and charity in order that its powers may be vastly increased.

The author of *The Imitation* thus describes inordinate self-love when he has Christ say: "My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything of the world. . . . If thy love be pure, simple,

[12] *De civitate Dei,* Bk. XIV, chap. 28. Pages like those we have quoted make one think that in St. Augustine infused contemplation often directed from on high the reasoning necessary for the written or spoken exposition of divine truth.

[13] St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 17, a.6 ad jum. Cf. *ibid.,* q.83, a.9: "Now our end is God toward whom our affections tend in two ways: first, by our willing the glory of God, secondly, by our willing to enjoy His glory. The first belongs to the love whereby we love God in Himself; the second belongs to the love whereby we love ourselves in God. Wherefore the first petition is expressed thus: *Hallowed be Thy name;* and the second thus: *Thy kingdom come,* by which we ask to come to the glory of His kingdom." And by an act of hope we can desire eternal life as our supreme good; and by an act of charity, desire it in order to glorify God eternally. Cf. Cajetan, *In Ham IIae,* q.23, a. 1, no. 2.

and well ordered, thou shalt not be in captivity to anything. Covet not that which thou mayest not have. Seek not to have that which may embarrass thee and deprive thee of thy inward liberty. It is wonderful that thou wilt not, from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly to Me, with all things that thou canst desire or have. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? Why art thou so worn with superfluous cares? Be resigned to My good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss. If thou seekest this or that, or wouldst be here or there for thy own interests' sake, and the more to indulge thy own will, thou wilt never be at rest or free from solicitude; for in everything there will be found some defect, and in every place there will be someone that will cross thee." [14]

The same book of *The Imitation* describes well the various movements of wounded nature, which remains weakened even after baptism:

Nature is crafty and draweth away many, ensnareth them and deceiveth them, and always proposeth self as her end. . . ." Nature is neither willing to be mortified, restrained, overcome, nor subject, neither of its own accord to be brought under obedience. . . . Nature laboreth for its own interest and considereth what gain it may derive from another. . . . It willingly receiveth honor and respect, . . . is afraid of shame and contempt; seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful; . . . hath regard to temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gains, is troubled at losses, and is irritated at every slight injurious word. . . . Nature is covetous, and liketh rather to take than to give, and loveth to have things exclusive and private. . . . Nature glorieth in noble place and descent, smileth on them that are in power, flattereth the rich. . . . It easily complaineth of want and of trouble; it coveteth to know secrets and to hear news; desireth to appear abroad, longeth to be taken notice of, and to do those things which may procure praise and admiration. . . .

[14] *The Imitation,* Bk. III, chap. 27.

15St. Thomas speaks in like manner (Ia IIae, q.109, a.2): "In the state of corrupt nature, man falls short of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to accomplish this good fully by his own natural powers. . . . But a man can do some particular good, such as building a house, planting a vineyard, and the like." *Ibid.,* a.3: "In the state of corrupt nature man falls short of this in the appetite of his rational will, which, unless it is cured by God's grace, follows its private good, on account of the corruption of nature."

Cf. IIIa, q.69, a.3: Even after baptism there remain concupiscence and the other wounds that arc in the process of healing, thereby furnishing an occasion of struggle and of merit.

Grace teacheth, therefore, to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration; and from everything, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of utility, and the praise and honor of God. . . . This grace is a supernatural light and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect, and a pledge of eternal salvation, which elevateth a man from earthly things to love such as are heavenly, and from carnal maketh him spiritual. Wherefore, as nature is the more kept down and subdued, with so much the greater abundance is grace infused; and every day by new visitations the interior man is reformed according to the image of God.[16]

St. Catherine of Siena, speaking of the effects of self-love, says: "The soul cannot live without love, but always desires to love something. . . . So, if the sensual affection desires to love sensual things, the eye of the intellect sets before itself for its sole object transitory things, with self-love, displeasure of virtue, and love of vice, whence it draws pride and impatience, and the memory is filled with nothing but what the affection presents to it. This love so dazzles the eye of the intellect that it can discern and see nothing but such glittering objects." [17]

We read in the same *Dialogue:* "Thus is injustice committed through miserable self-love, which has poisoned the whole world, and the mystical body of holy Church, and through which the garden of My spouse has run to seed and given birth to putrid flowers." [18] It is self-love that renders man unjust toward God, to whom he no longer renders the glory that is due Him, and toward souls to which he no longer gives the true goods without which they cannot live. Finally, self-love, which overthrows in our will the order willed by God, leads to trouble, discouragement, discord, and all dissensions; it brings about the total loss of peace, the tranquillity of order, which is truly found only in those who love God more than themselves and above all.

[18] *The Imitation,* Bk. III, chap. 54.

[17] *The Dialogtie,* chap. 51. St. Thomas (la Ilae, q. 58, a. 5) had likewise noted, following Aristotle, that every man judges of the end that is fitting for him according to the subjective dispositions of his will and sensible appetites: "Such as a man is, such does the end seem to him." The proud man indeed finds what satisfies his pride, the humble man what preserves him in humility.

[»] *The Dialogue,* chap. 122.

All the passages in Tauler's works where he speaks of the necessity of purifying the depths of our will should be consulted.[19]

The Purification of the Will by Progress in the Love of God

How can we restore to our more or less weakened and vitiated will its power for good, the real power that makes it conquer spiritual sloth and also pride, which is a weakness hidden under the mask of energy? To bring about this restoration, we must remember the harmony existing in the state of original justice in which, as long as man's will was docile and conformable to that of God, it had the grace and strength to dominate the passions, to prevent every fault, whence spring disorder and discouragement. To renew our spiritual energies we must, therefore, render our will increasingly docile to the will of God, who will then give us ever new graces to advance along the way of perfection.

The training of the will must be made by progress in the virtues which it ought to possess: the virtue of justice, which renders to everyone his due; of religion, which renders to God the worship we owe Him; of penance, which repairs the injury of sin; of obedience to superiors; of veracity or of loyalty; above all, of charity, of love of God and neighbor.[20]

From this higher point of view, the strength of will of a Napoleon seems insignificant compared to that of the sublime beggar, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, or that of the humble Curé of Ars. In the first centuries, the strength of will of Christian virgins, like Agnes and Cecilia, was incomparably superior to that of their executioners.

In the practice of all the virtues, docility to the divine will presupposes abnegation of self-will, that is, of the will not conformed to that of God. The spirit of sacrifice alone, by putting to death our inordinate self-love, can assure the first place to the love of God and give us peace. Profound peace of soul is impossible without the spirit of sacrifice. Therefore our Lord says: "If any man will come

19 See especially the Theological Introduction by Father Hugueny, O.P., in the French translation, I, 71-82.

20 St. Thomas discusses at length each of these virtues and the opposing vices in IIa IIae. A profound study on the training of the will might be drawn from this part of the *Summa,* since all these virtues, whether acquired or infused, have their seat in that faculty.

after Me, let him deny himself";[21] and also, "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself rcmaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life (selfishly) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world (who leads a sacrificed life) keepeth it unto life eternal." [22] In the spirit of abnegation we must be ready to abandon everything in order to do the will of God as it shall be manifested to us. We must say with the Psalmist: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." [23] Like St. Paul at the moment of his conversion, we must daily pray thus: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" [24]

Is this purification of the will in order to remove egoism and self-will, something difficult? By reason of reiterated faults, it is very difficult in certain persons, and without divine grace it is even impossible in everyone. In fact, only the love of God, which is the fruit of grace, can triumph over self-love and put it to death; but if the love of God grows in us, what was at first difficult becomes easy. With this meaning Christ said: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light." [25]

Mortification of self-will is facilitated in the religious life by the practice of obedience, which rectifies and considerably strengthens the will by making it daily more and more conformable to the divine will, manifested by the rule and the orders of superiors.

To succeed in purifying and strengthening the will, a person must act according to the profound convictions of Christian faith, and not according to his own spirit, which is more or less variable, according to circumstances and the fluctuations of opinion. When anyone has reflected before God and prayed to obtain His grace, he must act with decision in the way duty directs or in that which seems most conformable to the divine will. We have only one life, and it is short; it must not be wasted in trifles. Moreover, we must with persevering courage firmly and persistently will what appears to us to be our duty. In this way we avoid both the fluctuations of successive inclinations, some opposed to others, and unreasonable violence. True strength of will is calm; in calmness it is persevering so that it does not become discouraged by momentary lack of success

[21] Matt. 16:24.
[22] John 12:24 f.
[23] Ps. 107:2.
[24] Acts 9:6.
[25] Matt. 11:30.

or by any wounds received. No one is conquered until he has given up the struggle. And he who works for the Lord puts his confidence in God and not in himself.

Lastly, the strong will is the one that rests, not on the careening of obstinate pride, but on God, on His grace, which we ought to ask for daily with humility and confidence. If with humility, confidence, and perseverance we implore the graces necessary for our sanctification and salvation, they will infallibly be granted us in virtue of Christ's promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you." [26] Genuine strength of will, the effect of divine grace, is drawn from humble, trusting, and persevering prayer.[27] Therein is found the true supernatural training of the will. Prayer is our strength in our weakness. Knowledge of its power made St. Paul say: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." [28] This should be the sentiment of one who sees himself obliged to undergo martyrdom rather than deny his Christian faith. God never commands the impossible and gives to those who truly ask it the grace to be faithful in the midst of the greatest trials. Then the will becomes strong, with that divine strength of which the Psalmist speaks when he says: *Dominus fortitudo mea.* By divine grace the human will then shares in the power of God and frees itself from self-love, from the attraction of everything that turns it away from God and hinders it from being wholly His. Thus abnegation and the spirit of sacrifice are the inevitable way of divine union, in which the love of God is finally victorious over self-love or egoism. He who has this holy hatred of his ego, which is made up of self-love and pride, saves his soul for eternity and obtains even here on earth a peace and union with God which are a foretaste of eternal life.

The Spirit of Detachment

In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,*[29] St. John of the Cross sets forth a profound doctrine on the perfect abnegation of self-will. He indicates the most direct route to reach lofty perfection and shows

[28] Matt. 7:7.
[27] Cf. *Sunnna,* Ila Ilae, q.83, a.ï, 16.
[28] Phil. 4:13.
[29] Bk. Ill, chaps. 15 ff.

how the austerity of the narrow way leads to the sweetness of divine union. If we recall the elevation of the end he has in view, we will not consider the abnegation he demands exaggerated. A man who wishes to climb a mountain does not stop at the first difficulties; knowing that he needs energy, he urges himself forward. The same is true of him who truly wishes to make progress toward the summit of perfection.

We shall sum up the teaching of St. John of the Cross on detachment in respect to exterior goods and in regard to the goods of the spirit and of the heart, in a word, to all that is not God and His will.

We should detach ourselves from exterior goods, riches and honors. "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them." [30] St. Paul says: "The time is short . . . and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; . . . and they that use this world, as if they used it not." [31] Even those who do not effectively practice the counsel of evangelical poverty ought to have its spirit if they wish to tend to perfection.

We must detach ourselves from the goods of the body, from beauty, from health itself; it would be an aberration to cling to them more than to union with God. And we cling to health far more than we think; if it were irremediably taken from us, it would be a true sacrifice for us, and one that may be asked of us. All these things will pass away like a flower that withers.

We must avoid all complacency in the virtues we may have. To entertain any complacency would be vanity and perhaps amount to scorn of our neighbor. The Christian ought to esteem the virtues, not inasmuch as they are in him like a personal possession, but inasmuch as they lead the soul to God.

When we receive consolations in prayer, we must not dwell on them with satisfaction; to do so would be to make of this means of drawing near to God an obstacle that would hinder us from reaching Him. It would be the equivalent of pausing in a selfish fashion over something created and making an end of the means. By so doing, we would set out on the road of spiritual pride and illusion.[32] All that glitters is not gold; and we must be careful not to confound an imitation diamond with a real one. We should remind ourselves of

80 Ps. 61:11.
81 See I Cor. 7:29-31.
82 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chaps. 30, 32.

our Savior's words: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice; and all these things (all that is useful to your soul and even to your body) shall be added unto you." [33]

Therefore we understand that adversity is good for us in order to deliver us from illusion and make us find the true road again.

Finally, if a person were to receive extraordinary graces, such as the gift of prophecy, he should avoid all attachment to this divine favor and live in holy detachment in its regard, at the same time recalling the words of St. Paul: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." [34] Christ also says to His apostles: "But yet rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you (that you drive out demons); but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven." [35]

On the subject of eloquence, St. John of the Cross says: "For though it is true that a good style and action, profound learning, and correct expression have a greater effect when they accompany true spirituality; still when that is wanting, though the senses be charmed and the understanding delighted, but little or no substantial warmth reaches to the will. In general, the will remains dull and weak as before in good works, though marvelous things have been marvelously told it. . . . Though men may be wonderful preachers, yet their sermons are soon forgotten if they kindle no fire in the will." [38] This teaching of St. John of the Cross demonstrates how necessary it is that the preacher greatly purify his intention that his words may truly bear life-giving fruit, which will last for eternity. To effect this purification, his soul must live according to the spirit of immolation or of sacrifice, which assures the first place in the soul to the love of God and of souls in God.

The fruit of the purification of the will, which we have just mentioned, is peace, the tranquillity of order in which the soul is established with respect to God and its neighbor. This peace is not always joy, but it tends to become more profound and more lofty and to radiate even on the most troubled souls, giving them the light of

83 Matt. 6:33.
34 Cf. I Cor. 13:1.
85 Luke 10:20.
88 *The Ascent of Mount Cannel,* Bk. Ill, chap. 44.

life. This is what Christ says: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." They will make Him known and loved.

As a practical conclusion, each one ought, in his examination of conscience, to ask himself whether his spirit of self-abnegation is increasing or diminishing. If there is no longer the minimum of exterior mortification, it is a sign that interior mortification has disappeared, that he no longer tends toward perfection, and that he is like salt which has lost its savor.

Here it should be remembered that on the journey toward God, he who does not advance falls back. And what would a religious or sacerdotal life be in which there is evidence of slower and slower progress, like the movement of a stone that has been cast into the air and that will soon fall back? A uniformly retarded progress is followed by a recoil. Especially in the religious and sacerdotal life, this progress should, on the contrary, be so to speak uniformly accelerated, like the movement of a stone that tends toward the center of the earth which attracts it. Souls ought, in fact, to advance more rapidly toward God, the nearer they approach Him and are more drawn by Him.[37]

We should pray as follows: "My God, make me know the obstacles which I more or less consciously place to the working of grace in my soul. Show these obstacles to me at the moment when I am about to place them. Give me the strength to remove them, and, if I am negligent in doing so, do Thou deign to remove them, though I should suffer greatly. I wish only Thee, Lord, who alone art necessary. Grant that my life here on earth may be like eternal life begun."

He who would say this prayer frequently would make great progress, which would be written in the book of life. Undoubtedly he would receive many crosses, but he would be borne by them more than he would bear them, as a bird is borne by its wings more than it bears them. This is what *The Imitation* says: "If thou carry

[37] St. Thomas, *In Epist. ad Hebr.,* 10:25: "The natural movement increases in proportion as it draws near its end. The contrary is true of violent movement (e.g., of a stone cast into the air). Grace likewise moves one according to the natural mode. Therefore those who are in the state of grace ought to grow so much the more as they draw nearer the end." Cf. la Ilae, q. 35, a.6: "Every natural movement is more intense in the end."

the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end." [38] This is the true road by which one enters the inner courts of the kingdom of God.

[88] *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. II, chap. 12.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Healing of Pride

TO COMPLETE what we have said about the active purification of the intellect and will, we must speak particularly of the healing of two fatal spiritual maladies: pride and spiritual sloth.

First of all, we shall see the general nature of pride in contradistinction to the virtues of humility and of magnanimity; then the various forms of pride and the way to heal them.

The True Nature of Pride

To know the true nature of pride, we should first note that it is a spiritual sin, in itself less shameful and less debasing, but more grievous, says St. Thomas,[1] than the sins of the flesh, because it turns us more away from God. The sins of the flesh could not be in the demon who was irremediably lost through pride. Scripture on several occasions says that "pride is the beginning of all sin," [2] because it does away with the humble submission and obedience of the creature to God. The first sin of the first man was a sin of pride,[3] the desire of the knowledge of good and evil,[4] that he might be his own guide and not have to obey. In the opinion of St. Thomas,[5] pride is more than a capital sin; it is the source of the capital sins, and particularly of vainglory, which is one of its first effects.

Some are deceived, at least practically, about the true nature of pride, and as a result, without wishing to do so, may commend false humility, which is a form of hidden pride more dangerous than that which displays itself and makes itself ridiculous.

[1] See Ia IIae, q.73, a. 5.
[2] Ecclus. 10:15.
[3] Cf. Ia IIae, q.84, a.2; q.89, a.3 ad 1um; q. 163, a. 1.
[4] Gen. 3:5 f.
[5] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 161, a.8 ad 1um.

In determining exactly the true nature of pride, the difficulty comes from the fact that it is opposed not only to humility, but also to magnanimity, which is sometimes confounded with it.® We should be at pains not to confound practically the magnanimity of others with pride, and not to mistake our pusillanimity or timidity for true humility. Sometimes the inspiration of the gift of counsel is needed to discern these things in a really practical manner, to see how the truly humble soul must be magnanimous, and how false humility is distinguished from the true. The Jansenists saw a lack of humility in the desire for frequent Communion.

St. Thomas, who was exceedingly humble and magnanimous, established very well the exact definition of these two virtues, which should be united, and that of the defects opposed to them. He defined pride as the inordinate love of our own excellence. The proud man wishes, in fact, to appear superior to what he really is: there is falsity in his life. When this inordinate love of our own excellence is concerned with sensible goods, for example, pride in our physical strength, it belongs to that part of the sensibility called the irascible appetite. It is in the will when it is concerned with goods of the spiritual order, such as intellectual pride and spiritual pride. This defect of the will presupposes that our intellect considers our own merits and the insufficiencies of our neighbors more than it ought, and that it exaggerates in order to raise us above them.

Love of our own excellence is said to be inordinate as it is contrary to right reason and divine law. It is directly opposed to the humble submission of the defectible and deficient creature before the majesty of God. It differs exceedingly from the legitimate desire of great things conformable to our vocation: for example, a magnanimous soldier can and ought to desire victory for his country without pride entering into his wish. Whereas the proud man immoderately desires his own excellence, the magnanimous man devotes himself to a great cause, superior to himself, and accepts in advance all humiliations in order to accomplish what is in his estimation a great duty.

Pride is therefore, as St. Augustine says,7 a perverse love of greatness; it leads us to imitate God in a wrong way, by not bearing with

• *Ibid.,* a. I.

7 *De civitate Dei,* Bk. XIV, chap. 13: "Superbia est perversae celsitudinis appetitus."

the equality of our fellow men and by wishing to impose our domination on them, instead of living with them in humble submission to the divine law.[8]

Pride is thus more directly opposed to humility than to magnanimity; the inverse holds true for pusillanimity, which is more directly opposed to nobility of soul. In addition, whereas humility and magnanimity are connected virtues which complete and balance each other like the two arches of an ogive, pride and pusillanimity are contradictory vices, like temerity and cowardice.

What we have said shows that pride is a bandage over the eyes of the spirit, which hinders us from seeing the truth, especially that relative to the majesty of God and the excellence of those who surpass us. It prevents us from wishing to be instructed by them, or it prompts us not to accept direction without argument. Pride thus perverts our life as one would bend a spring; it hinders us from asking light from God, who consequently hides His truth from the proud. Pride turns us away, therefore, from the affective knowledge of divine truth, from contemplation, to which humility, on the contrary, disposes us. Therefore Christ says: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones." [9] Spiritual pride is most powerful in turning us away from the contemplation of divine things. With this meaning, St. Paul writes: "Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth." [10]

The Different Forms of Pride

St. Gregory [11] enumerates several degrees of pride: namely, to believe that we have through our own efforts what we have received from God; to believe that we have merited what we have gratuitously received; to attribute to ourselves a good we lack, for example, great learning, when we do not possess it; to wish to be preferred to others and to depreciate them.

Doubtless it is rare that a man lets himself be led so far astray by pride as to reject the existence of God, to declare that he will have "neither God nor master," even to refuse explicitly to submit him-

8 *Ibid.,* Bk. XIX, chap. 12.
9 Luke 10:21.
10 Cf. I Cor. 8:1.
11 *Morales,* Bk. XXIII, chap. 5.

self to God as Lucifer did, or to go so far as to reject the authority of the Church as formal heretics do. We clearly recognize in theory that God is our first principle, that He alone is great, and that obedience is due Him; but in practice it happens that we esteem ourselves inordinately, as if we were the author of the qualities we possess. We may take complacency in them, forgetting our dependence on Him who is the Author of all good, whether natural or supernatural. It is not rare to find a sort of Pelagianism in men who are in no way Pelagians in theory.

A man exaggerates his personal qualities by closing his eyes to his own defects; and he even ends by glorying in what is a deviation of the spirit, as if it were a quality. He may believe, for example, that he is broadminded because he pays scant attention to the little duties of daily life; he forgets that to be faithful in great things, he must begin by being so in little things, for the day is composed of hours, the hour of minutes, and the minute of seconds. Thus he is led to prefer himself unjustly to others, to disparage them, to believe himself better than some who are, nevertheless, really his superiors.

These sins of pride, which are often venial, may become mortal if they incite us to gravely reprehensible acts.

St. Bernard [12] enumerates also several progressive manifestations of pride: curiosity, levity of mind, foolish and misplaced joy, boasting, singularity, arrogance, presumption, the refusal to recognize one's errors, the dissimulation of one's sins in confession, rebellion, unbridled liberty, the habit of sin even to the contempt of God.

The different forms of pride may also be considered in relation to the different goods, according as a person takes pride in his birth, wealth, physical qualities, knowledge, his piety or his sham piety.

Intellectual pride leads certain studious men to reject the traditional interpretation of dogmas, to attenuate them, or to deform them in order to harmonize them with what they call the exigencies of the mind. In others, this pride is manifested by a singular attachment to their own judgment, to such a degree that they do not even wish to listen to reasons sometimes stronger in favor of the adverse opinion. Some finally, who are theoretically in the truth, are so satisfied to be right, so filled with their learning which has cost them so much, that their souls are, as it were, saturated with it and no longer

[12] *De gradibus humilitatis,* chap. io.

humbly open to receive the superior light that would come from God in prayer.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "You are now full; you are now become rich." [13] On seeing their sufficiency, one would have said that they had reached the full Messianic royalty to which the faithful will be associated in eternal beatitude.

If a man is full of himself, how will he receive the superior gifts which the Lord could and would grant him in order that he might do great good to souls and save them? We can see, consequently, why intellectual pride, even in those who are theoretically right, is a formidable obstacle to the grace of contemplation and to union with God. It is truly a bandage over the eyes of the spirit.[14]

Spiritual pride is not a lesser obstacle. Speaking of beginners, St. John of the Cross remarks:

> When beginners become aware of their own fervor and diligence in their spiritual works and devotional exercises, this prosperity of theirs gives rise to secret pride—though holy things tend of their own nature to humility—because of their imperfections; and the issue is that they conceive a certain satisfaction in the contemplation of their works and of themselves. From the same source, too, proceeds that empty eagerness which they display in speaking of the spiritual life before others, and sometimes as teachers rather than learners. They condemn others in their heart when they see that they are not devout in tl eir way. Sometimes also they say it in words, showing themselves herein to be like the Pharisee, who in the act of prayer boasted of his own works and despised the publican (Luke 18:11 f.). . . . They see the mote in the eye of their brother, but not the beam which is in their own.
>
> Sometimes also when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of their spirit and conduct . . . they decide

[13] Cf. I Cor. 4:8.

[14] In her *Dialogue,* St. Catherine of Siena says that pride obscures the knowledge of the truth, nourishes self-love, and is the enemy of obedience, and that its pith is impatience. In chapter 128 she writes: "O cursed pride, based on self-love, how hast thou blinded the eye of their intellect, that while they seem to love themselves and be tender to themselves, they are in truth cruel. . . . They are really in the greatest poverty and misery, for they are deprived of the riches of virtue and have fallen from the heights of grace into the depths of mortal sin. They seem to see, but are blind for they know neither themselves nor Me." Pride is truly like a bandage over the eyes of the spirit. It is at least like a darkened glass, which lets things be seen only through its color. Consequently it perverts judgment.

that they are not understood, and that their superiors are not spiritual men because they do not approve and sanction their proceedings. . . . They are occasionally desirous that others should perceive their spirituality and devotion, and for that end they give outward tokens by movements, sighs, and various ceremonies. . . . Many of them seek to be the favorites of their confessors, and the result is endless envy and disquietude. Ashamed to confess their sins plainly lest their confessors should think less of them, they go about palliating them that they may not seem so bad: which is excusing rather than accusing themselves. Sometimes they go to a stranger to confess their sins, that their usual confessor may think they are not sinners, but good people. . . . Some beginners, too, make light of their faults, and at other times indulge in immoderate grief when they commit them. They thought themselves already saints, and so they become angry and impatient with themselves, which is another great imperfection.[18]

The Defects Born of Pride

The principal defects springing from pride are presumption, ambition, and vainglory.

Presumption is the desire and inordinate hope of doing what is above one's power.[16] The presumptuous man believes himself capable of studying and solving the most difficult questions; he settles the most abstruse problems with rash haste. He fancies that he has sufficient light to guide himself without consulting a director. Instead of building his interior life on humility, renunciation, fidelity to the duty of the present moment even in little things, he speaks particularly of magnanimity, of apostolic zeal, or indeed aspires to the immediate attainment of the high degrees of prayer without passing through the various stages, forgetting that he is still only a beginner, whose will is still weak and full of egoism. He is still full of self; a great void must be created in him in order that his soul may some day be filled with God and able to give Him to others.

From presumption springs ambition, under one form or another. Because a man presumes too greatly on his powers and judges himself superior to others, he wishes to dominate them, to impose on them his ideas in matters of doctrine, or to govern them. St. Thomas[17] says that a man manifests ambition when he seeks offices

[18] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. 1, chap. 2.
[16] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 130, a. 1.
[17] *Ibid.,* 4.131, a. i.

carrying with them honor which he does not merit; when he seeks honors for himself and not for the glory of God or the profit of others. How many schemes, secret solicitations, and intrigues ambition inspires in all walks of life! [18]

Pride leads also to vainglory, that is, the wish to be esteemed for oneself, without referring this honor to God, the source of all good, and often a wish to be esteemed for vain things. This is the case of the pedant who loves to display his knowledge, binding himself and wishing to bind others to trifles.[19]

Many defects spring from vainglory: [20] boasting, which easily makes a person ridiculous; hypocrisy, which under the appearances of virtue, hides vices; stubbornness, contention or asperity in defending one's opinion, which engenders discord; and also disobedience, sharp criticisms of superiors.

Thus we see that pride which is not repressed sometimes produces disastrous effects. How many discords, hatreds, and wars are bom of pride! It has been justly said that pride is the great enemy of perfection because it is the source of numerous sins and deprives us of many graces and merits. Scripture says: "God resisted! the proud and giveth grace to the humble." [21] And Christ says of the Pharisees, who pray and give alms in order to be seen by men: "They have received their reward";[22] they cannot expect that of our heavenly Father, since they have acted for themselves and not for Him. Lastly, a life dominated by pride is grievously sterile and presages perdition unless a remedy is promptly applied.

The Remedy for Pride

The great remedy for pride is to recognize practically the majesty of God. As St. Michael the archangel said: "Who is like to God?" He alone is great; He is the source of all natural and supernatural good. "Without Me," says our Lord, "you can do nothing" in the order of salvation.[23] St. Paul adds: "For who distinguisheth thee? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast

18 Cf. Bossuet, *Sermon sur l'ambition.*
19 See IIa IIae, q. 132, a. 1-3.
20 *Ibid.,* a. j.
21 Jas. 4:6.
22 Matt. 6:2.
23 John 15:5.

received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" [24] "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." [25]

St. Thomas states also: "Since God's love is the cause of goodness in things, . . . no one thing would be better than another if God did not will greater good for one than another." [26] And then why should we glory in the natural or supernatural good that is in us, as if we had not received it, as if it were our very own and not ordained to glorify God, the source of all good? "For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." [27]

The remedy for pride is to tell ourselves that of ourselves we are not, that we have been created out of nothing by the gratuitous love of God, who continues freely to preserve us in existence; otherwise we would return to nothingness. And if grace is in us, it is because Jesus Christ redeemed us by His blood.

The remedy for pride is also to tell ourselves that there is in us something inferior to nothingness itself: the disorder of sin and its effects. As sinners, we deserve scorn and all humiliations; the saints have thought so, and they certainly judged better than we.

How can we glory in our merits, as if they came solely from us? Without habitual grace and actual grace, we would be absolutely incapable of the least meritorious act. As St. Augustine says: "God crowns His gifts, when He crowns our merits."

This conviction, however, must not remain theoretical, but should be practical and inspire our acts. *The Imitation* says:

> Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the courses of the stars, and neglecteth himself. He that knoweth himself, becometh vile to himself and taketh no delight in the praises of men. . . . Learned men are very willing to seem wise, and to be called so. . . . If thou wouldst acquire knowledge and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing. . . . If thou shouldst see another openly do wrong or commit some grievous sins, thou needest not think thyself better; for thou knowest not

[24] See I Cor. 4:7.

[25] Cf. II Cor. 3:5.

[26] Cf. Ia, q. 20, a. 3. This is the principle of predilection, which contains virtually the whole tract on predestination and that on grace.

[27] Phil. 2:13.

how long thou mayest be able to persevere in well-doing. We are all frail; but see thou think none more frail than thyself. . . .

Be not ashamed to wait on others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be looked upon as poor in this world. . . . Trust not in thine own knowledge, . . . but rather in the grace of God, who helpeth the humble and humbleth them that presume upon themselves. . . . Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps thou be accounted worse in the sight of God. . . . What pleaseth men, oftentimes displeaseth Him. . . . Continual peace dwelleth with the humble; but in the heart of the proud is frequent envy and indignation. . . .

The humble man God protecteth and delivereth; the humble He loveth and consoleth; to the humble He inclineth Himself; on the humble He bestoweth bounteous grace, and after he has been brought low, raiseth him up unto glory. To the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly inviteth and draweth him unto Himself.[28]

But to reach this humility of mind and heart, a profound purification is needed. That which we impose on ourselves is not sufficient; there must be a passive purification by the light of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which causes the bandage of pride to fall away, opens our eyes, shows us the depth of frailty and wretchedness that exists in us, the utility of adversity and humiliation, and finally makes us say to the Lord: "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications." [29] "It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill of us. . . . These are often helps to humility, and rid us of vainglory." [30] It is in adversity that we can learn what we really are and what great need we have of God's help: "What doth he know, that hath not been tried?" [31]

After this purification, pride and its effects will gradually be felt less. A person, instead of letting himself fall into jealousy toward those who have more natural or supernatural qualities, tells himself then that, as St. Paul remarks, the hand ought not be jealous of the eye, but, on the contrary, it should be happy because it benefits from what the eye sees. The same is true in the mystical body of Christ; far from becoming jealous, souls ought to enjoy in a holy manner the qualities they find in their neighbor. Though they do not possess

28 *The Imitation,* Bk. I, chaps. 2, 7; Bk. II, chap. 2.
20Ps. 118:71.
80 *The Imitation,* Bk. I, chap. 12.
81 Ecclus. 34:9.

them themselves, they benefit by them. They should rejoice over everything that cooperates in the glory of God and the good of souls. When this is the case, the bandage of pride falls away and the soul's gaze recovers its simplicity and penetration, which make it enter little by little into the inner life of God.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Healing of Spiritual Sloth, or Acedia

AMONG the capital sins, there is one, spiritual sloth, called also acedia, which is directly opposed to the love of God and to the joy that results from generosity in His service. We must discuss it in order to complete what we have said about the active purification of the will and to note exactly the grave confusions made by the quietists on this point.

We shall see, first of all, the general nature of spiritual sloth, then the gravity of this evil and the way to cure it.[1]

The Nature of Spiritual Sloth, or Acedia

Sloth in general, *pigritia,* is a voluntary and culpable repugnance to work, to effort, and consequently a tendency to idleness, or at least to negligence, to pusillanimity,[2] which is opposed to generosity or magnanimity.

Sloth is not the languor or torpor in action which comes from poor health; it is an evil disposition of the will and of the sensible appetites, by which one fears and refuses effort, wishes to avoid all trouble, and seeks a *dolce farniente.* It has often been remarked that the slothful man is a parasite, who lives at the expense of others, as tranquil as a woodchuck when he is undisturbed in his idleness, and ill-humored when an effort is made to oblige him to work. This vice begins with unconcern and negligence in work, and manifests itself by a progressive dislike for all serious, physical and mental labor.

When idleness affects the accomplishment of the religious duties

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q.35; *De malo,* q. 11; St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 7.

[2] Cf. *ibid.,* q. 133, a.2.

necessary to sanctification, it is called acedia.[8] It is an evil sadness opposed to spiritual joy, which is the fruit of generosity in the love of God. Acedia is a disgust for spiritual things, a disgust which leads one to perform them negligently, to shorten them, or to omit them under vain pretexts. It is the cause of tepidity.

This sadness, which is radically opposed to that of contrition, depresses the soul and weighs it down because it does not react as it should. Then it reaches a voluntary disgust for spiritual things, because they demand too much effort and self-discipline. Whereas devotion, which is the promptness of the will in the service of God, lifts the soul up, spiritual sloth weighs down and crushes the soul and ends by causing it to find the yoke of the Lord unbearable and to flee the divine light, which reminds it of its duties. St. Augustine says: "Light which is so pleasant to pure eyes, becomes hateful to infirm eyes which can no longer bear it."

This depressing sadness, the result of negligence, and this disgust, which is at least indirectly voluntary, are quite different from the sensible or spiritual aridity which, in divine trials, is accompanied by true contrition for our sins, by fear of offending God, by a keen desire for perfection, by a need of solitude, of recollection, and of the prayer of simple gaze.

St. John of the Cross, referring to the condition of the spiritual man in the passive purification of the senses, says:

> We find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things . . . but the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness; the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards, because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God. In that case it is clear that this weariness of spirit and aridity are not the results of weakness and lukewarmness; for the peculiarity of lukewarmness is the want of earnestness in, and of interior solicitude for, the tilings of God. There is, therefore, a great difference between dryness and lukewarmness, for the latter consists in great remissness and weakness of will and spirit, in the want of all solicitude about serving God. The true purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a painful anxiety, because the soul thinks that it is not serving God. . . . For when mere bodily indisposition is the cause, all that it does is to produce disgust and the ruin of bodily health, without the

[8] From *acedior,* to suffer impatiently, to grieve over one's sin, because one fails to make an effort for what is good.

desire of serving God which belongs to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensual part of man be greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works, by reason of the little satisfaction they furnish, the spirit is, nevertheless, ready and strong.[4]

In other words, this divine trial is the privation of accidental devotion alone and not of substantial devotion, which consists in the will to give oneself generously and promptly to the service of God.[5] Spiritual sloth or acedia, on the contrary, is, by reason of culpable negligence, the privation of substantial devotion itself and at least indirectly voluntary disgust for spiritual things because of the abnegation and effort they demand.

Whereas in the divine trial of which we are speaking, a person suffers because he has distractions and strives to diminish their number, in the state of spiritual sloth a man welcomes them, lets himself glide easily into useless thoughts, and does not react against them. When such is the case, distractions that are at least indirectly voluntary soon invade prayer almost completely; the examination of conscience, which has become annoying, is suppressed; sins are no longer accounted for; and the soul descends farther and farther along the slope of tepidity. It falls into spiritual anaemia in which little by little, with the defects springing from it, the three concupiscences awaken.

The confusion of spiritual sloth with the divine trial of aridity was one of the chief errors of the quietists. For this reason the two following propositions of Molinos were condemned: "Disgust for spiritual things is good; by it the soul is purified, freed from self-love." "When the interior soul feels repugnance for discursive meditation on God, for the virtues, when it remains cold, and does not experience any fervor, it is a good sign."[6] These propositions were condemned as offensive and dangerous in practice. The fact of the matter is certainly that disgust for spiritual things is not at all good, that it is an evil and a sin as soon as it is voluntary, whether directly or indirectly so, by reason of negligence. St. Paul writes to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God. . . . Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood,

[4] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.
[5] Cf. IIa IIae, q.8i, a. 1.
[6] Denzinger, nos. 1148 f.

with honor preventing one another, in carefulness not slothful, in spirit fervent, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, instant in prayer."[7] How far these words are from the quietism of Molinos!

The latter confounded spiritual sloth with the aridity and dryness of divine trials, not observing that the soul which bears these trials well, far from being slothful, has a keen desire for God and for perfection, and therefore preserves a true, substantial devotion of the will in the absence of sensible devotion of which it is deprived. Molinos confounded sensible and absolutely involuntary disgust for divine things with the disgust which is at least indirectly voluntary and culpable because of sloth and negligence.

St. John of the Cross, on the contrary, in *The Dark Night* gives an excellent description of spiritual sloth. Writing about the imperfections of beginners, he says:

> As to spiritual sloth, beginners are wont to find their most spiritual occupations irksome, and avoid them as repugnant to their taste; for, being so given to sweetness in spiritual things, they loathe such occupations when they find no sweetness. If they miss once this sweetness in prayer which is their joy,— it is expedient that God should deprive them of it in order to try them — they will not resume it; at other times they omit it, or return to it with a bad grace. Thus, under the influence of sloth they neglect the way of perfection— which is the denial of their will and pleasure for God— for the gratification of their own will, which they serve rather than the will of God. Many of these will have it that God should will what they will, and are afflicted when they must will what He wills, reluctantly submitting their own will to the will of God. As a result, they often imagine that what is not according to their will is also not according to the will of God; and, on the other hand, when they are pleased, they believe that God is pleased. They measure Him by themselves, and not themselves by Him. . . . They also find it wearisome to obey when they are commanded to do what they like not; and because they walk in the way of consolation and spiritual sweetness, they are too weak for the rough trials of perfection. They are like persons delicately nurtured who avoid with heavy hearts all that is hard and rugged, and are offended at the cross wherein the joys of the spirit consist. The more spiritual the work they have to do, the more irksome do they feel it to be. And because they insist on having their own way and will in spiritual things, they enter on the "strait way that leadeth unto

[7] Rom. 12: i, 10 f.

life" (Matt. 16:25), of which Christ speaks, with repugnance and heaviness of heart.[8]

Some who abandon prayer say, in order to cloak spiritual sloth: "The sweetness of prayer must be sacrificed to the austerity of study" or of work. If a truly generous person made this statement, it would mean: "One must know how to sacrifice the sweetness of prayer, especially of sensible devotion, to the austerity of the study or the work necessary for the salvation of souls." But if this statement is made by someone who is losing all true devotion, it does not make sense; for such a one in no way sacrifices the delights of prayer, which he does not experience, and he is only seeking to hide his spiritual sloth under the veil of a relatively exterior work in which he seeks himself. This man flees interior work because of spiritual sloth. True contemplation and union with God should, it is clear, not be sacrificed to study, which is subordinate to them; to do so would be to sacrifice the end for the means. Moreover, study not inspired by the love of God and of souls would, from the spiritual point of view, remain truly fruitless. In short, when a man says, "The sweetness of prayer must be sacrificed to the austerity of work," he wishes to forget that prayer is often dry. This is why it is more difficult to lead souls to a true life of profound and persevering prayer than to induce them to read and talk about books which appear on the subject. Finally, spiritual sloth not infrequently grows out of an excessive, unsanctified natural activity in which a person takes complacence instead of seeking God and the good of souls in it.

The Gravity of Spiritual Sloth and Its Results

Spiritual sloth is gravely sinful when it reaches the point of giving up the religious duties necessary for our salvation and sanctification: for example, when it goes so far as to omit the hearing of Mass on Sunday.[9] When it leads us to omit religious acts of lesser importance without a reason, the sin is only venial; but if we do not struggle against this negligence, it soon becomes more serious, placing us

[8] Bk. 1, chap. 7.

[9] Of. Ha Hac, q.35, a.3. St. Thomas even says *(De malo,* q.n, a.3 ad 6um): "That man should delight in God, falls under the precept, just as that man should love God, because delight follows love."

in a genuine state of tepidity or spiritual relaxation. This state is a sort of moral anaemia, in which evil tendencies awaken little by little, seek to prevail, and manifest themselves by numerous deliberate venial sins, which dispose us to still graver faults, just as bodily anaemia prepares the way for the invasion of the germ of a disease, the beginning of a serious illness.

Spiritual sloth or acedia is even, as St. Gregory[10] and St. Thomas[11] show, a capital sin, the root of many others. Why is this? Because man seeks material consolations in order to flee from the sadness and disgust which spiritual things inspire in him on account of the renunciation and self-discipline which they demand. As Aristotle says, "No one can long remain in sadness without any joy,"[12] and then he who deprives himself of all spiritual joy through his own negligence and sloth, does not delay in seeking inferior pleasures.

Consequently, disastrous results follow disgust for spiritual things and for the work of sanctification, a sin which is directly opposed to the love of God and to the holy joy resulting therefrom. When life does not rise toward God, it descends or falls into evil sadness which oppresses the soul. From this evil sadness, says St. Gregory *(Joe. citj,* are born malice—and no longer only weakness—rancor toward one's neighbor, pusillanimity in the face of duty to be accomplished, discouragement, spiritual torpor even to the forgetting of the precepts, and finally, dissipation of spirit and the seeking after forbidden things. This seeking after unlawful things manifests itself by the externalization of life, by curiosity, loquacity, uneasiness, instability, and fruitless agitation.[13] Thus a person arrives at spiritual blindness and the progressive weakening of the will.

Descending this slope, many have lost sight of the grandeur of the Christian vocation, have forgotten the promises they made to God, and have taken the descending road, which at first seems broad, but which grows narrower and narrower, whereas the narrow road, which leads upward, becomes ever wider, immense as God Himself to whom it leads.

In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* St. John of the Cross says on this

10 *Morales,* Bk. XXXI, chap. 17.
11 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 35, a. 4.
12 *Ethics,* Bk. VIII, chap. 5.
13 Cf. IIa IIae, 9.33, a.4 ad 311m.

subject: "Dissipation of the mind engenders in its turn spiritual sloth and lukewarmness, which grow into weariness and sadness in divine things, so that in the end we come to hate them." [14]

The Cure for Spiritual Sloth

Cassian [15] declared that experience proves that a person triumphs over the temptation to spiritual sloth, not by fleeing from it, but by resisting it. On this subject St. Thomas observes: "Sin is ever to be shunned, but the assaults of sin should be overcome, sometimes by flight, sometimes by resistance; by flight, when a continued thought increases the incentive to sin, as in lust; . . . by resistance, when perseverance in the thought diminishes the incentive to sin, which incentive arises from some trivial consideration. This is the case with sloth, because the more we think about spiritual goods, the more pleasing they become to us, and forthwith sloth dies away." [16]

We must, therefore, conquer spiritual sloth by real love of God, by true devotion of the will, which ought to subsist in spite of sensible aridity. We must revert again and again to the prolonged consideration of the eternal goods which are promised us.

And to recover the spirit of faith, enthusiasm, and generosity in the love of God, we must every day courageously impose some sacrifices on ourselves in those matters in which we are weakest. It is the first step that costs; but after a week of effort the task becomes easy: for example, to rise at the appointed hour and to be obliging to everybody. All spiritual authors say that one of the remedies for tepidity is frankness with ourselves and with our confessor, a serious examination of conscience every day in order to rise again, the assiduous practice of our religious duties coupled with our duties of state, fidelity to prayer and to the morning offering, which we ought to make to God of all our actions during the day. And since we have little to present to God, let us offer Him frequently the precious blood of Jesus and the interior act of oblation ever living in His heart. Blessed are they who renew this offering when they hear the hour strike, and who offer the fleeting hour that it may bear fruits for eternity, that rhe moment which is passing may remain in the eternal instant which does not pass.

[14] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. Ill, chap. 21.
[15] *De instit. monasteriorum,* Bk. X, cap. ult.
[16] Cf. Ha Ilae, q. 35, a. 1 ad 4am.

Above all, some daily sacrifices will restore vigor and tone to our spiritual life. Thus we will gradually recover substantial fervor, promptness of the will in the service of God, even if sensible devotion is lacking, a privation we should accept in order to make reparation for past offenses.

To conquer spiritual sloth and to avoid spiritual instability, we should determine the religious employment of our time: for example, divide the day by the recitation of the parts of the Divine Office, or of the Rosary. Some interior souls divide the week according to the mysteries of faith, the rule of our life: Sunday is consecrated to God by special devotion and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity. Monday is consecrated to the mystery of the Incarnation by recalling the *Ecce venio* of Christ and the *Ecce ancilla Domini* of Mary. Tuesday is devoted to the thought of our Savior's hidden life. Wednesday is devoted to His apostolic life. Thursday recalls the institution of the Eucharist and of the priesthood. Friday is consecrated to living the dolorous Passion, to asking for love of the cross. Saturday is given over to the thought of the privileges of Mary, her sorrows, and her role as Mediatrix and Co-redemptrix.

Thus instead of losing time which flees, we recover it and gain it for eternity. And gradually we recover spiritual joy, that of which St. Paul speaks when he writes to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpassed! all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." [17]

[17] Phil. 4:4-7.

CHAPTER XXX

Sacramental Confession

> "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."
>
> John 20:22 f.

WE HAVE seen that the purification of the soul is an effect of the mortification of the senses, of self-will, and of personal judgment; we shall see also that it is an effect of prayer. Moreover, God, in His love for us, has placed within our reach other easy and powerful means to purify us, the sacraments, which operate by themselves, *ex opere operato,* and produce in the soul which has prepared itself by acts of faith and love a much more abundant grace than it would obtain by making the same acts without the sacraments.

However, if the sacraments by themselves, by the divine virtue they contain, have an essential efficacy, the measure of grace produced by them varies according to the dispositions of those who receive them; the more perfect they are, the more abundant is the grace, and the differences between a number of persons receiving the same sacrament are much greater than one ordinarily imagines.

The sacrament of penance is one of the most precious means of sanctification; it must be well received, and routine, which would considerably diminish its effect, should be avoided. It is, therefore, important for us to see how we should prepare for sacramental confession, how we should make a good confession, and what are its fruits.

Preparation for Confession

To prepare worthily for confession, we should examine our consciences and arouse ourselves to contrition.

The examination of conscience requires more care in proportion as the penitent falls into more sins and has little knowledge of his interior state. However, those who each evening examine their principal failings, have no trouble at all in knowing themselves well, and they are thereby stirred to make serious efforts at amendment.

In the case of spiritual persons who confess frequently and who are careful to avoid deliberate venial sins, the examination of conscience, as St. Alphonsus remarks, does not require much time. It is advisable for such a person to ask himself: What remains of this week to be written in God, in the book of life? In what have I acted for God, in what for myself, by yielding to my temperament, my egoism, my pride? When he thus considers the state of his soul from above and asks for light, he often obtains the grace of a penetrating gaze on his own life.

We must distinguish here grave sins, more or less deliberate venial sins, and the faults of frailty.

If a man who tends towards perfection has the misfortune to commit mortal sins in a moment of weakness, he must accuse himself of them sincerely and clearly at the beginning of his confession, without seeking to cause them to pass unperceived in the multitude of venial sins. Fie must indicate their number, kind, and cause, and especially have a profound contrition for them accompanied by a firm purpose of avoiding in the future not only the sins themselves, but their occasions and causes. Even after receiving pardon, he must also keep alive in his heart the sincere desire to atone, by an austere life and a generous love, for the evil committed. He should also remember how the Apostle, St. Peter, wept over his denial, humbled himself profoundly, thanked infinite Mercy, and continued on his way even to martyrdom.

An isolated mortal sin, when immediately confessed and atoned for, leaves scarcely any traces in the soul, which may at once resume its ascent from the very spot where it fell, without having to retrace all the road that had already been traveled. Thus he who stumbles midway in an ascent, may, when he picks himself up, promptly continue his climb from the spot which he had reached.

Venial sins committed with full deliberation are a serious obstacle to perfection, especially when they are frequent and the soul is attached to them. They are real maladies, which weaken the Christian soul. "Do not allow sin to grow old in thee," Christ said to St. Ger-

trude. Fully deliberate venial sin, when not rejected, is like a poison that is not vomited forth and that, although it does not cause death immediately, acts slowly on the organism. For instance, close attention must be paid to avoid keeping voluntarily any petty rancor, or attachment to one's own judgment, to self-will, to habits of rash judgment, of slander, of dangerous natural affections that would be a fetter, depriving us of liberty of spirit and all spontaneous movement toward God. When we deliberately refuse the Lord these manifestly demanded sacrifices, we cannot expect from Him the graces that lead to perfection. Consequently we must plainly accuse ourselves of fully deliberate venial sins against charity, humility, the virtue of religion, and so forth, especially those which are most humiliating. Their cause must be sought with a firm resolution to avoid them. Otherwise, of course, there is no longer any real and effective tendency to perfection. This is a point of primary importance.

There are other semi-deliberate venial sins, which are committed with less reflection and into which there enters a certain amount of surprise and impulse, but to which the will adheres with a certain complacency. We must guard against them, especially if they recur frequently; they show that the soul fights too feebly and is not determined to free itself from all obstacles.

Sins of frailty are those committed inadvertently because of human weakness; the will has only a small share in them; it yields momentarily, but promptly disavows its weakness. Sins of this kind cannot be completely and continually avoided, but their number should be diminished. They are not a serious obstacle to perfection because they are quickly atoned for; yet it is well to submit them to the influence of the sacrament of penance because thereby purity of soul will become more complete.[1]

[1] An imperfection is distinguished from these sins of frailty because it is only an act of lesser generosity in the service of God and of slighter esteem for the evangelical counsels. This is the case with a man who has five talents and sometimes acts as if he had only two; his act is still meritorious, but weak *(remissus),* and he is more or less clearly conscious of this inferiority. What is less good in itself must not be confused with what is essentially evil; what is less good for us here and now must not be confused with what would even now be evil for us. The lesser good is not an evil, as the lesser evil is not a good. Evidently we must avoid confusing good and evil. Consult our opinion on this point in *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* 1, 360-89.

But if it is theoretically easy to draw a distinction, practically and con-

The Confession Itself

Confession should be made with a great spirit of faith, remembering that the confessor holds the place of our Lord. He is a judge, since this sacrament is administered in the form of a judgment: *Ego te absolvo* . . . ; but he is also a spiritual father and a physician, who benevolently points out remedies if the penitent clearly reveals his suffering. Consequently it is not enough to make a vague accusation that would tell the confessor nothing, as for example: I have had distractions in my prayers. It is advisable to say: I have been especially distracted during such and such an exercise of piety through negligence, because I began it badly, without recollection, or because I did not sufficiently combat distractions springing from a petty rancor or from too sensible an affection or from study. It is also fitting to recall resolutions taken and to tell whether we have failed more or less in keeping them. Thus routine and negligence will be avoided.

We need especially to excite contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, its indispensable consequence. To do this, we should think of the genuine motives of contrition, both as regards God and as regards ourselves. We must ask for the grace to see more clearly that sin, no matter how slight it may be, is an offense against God, resistance to His will, resistance which certainly displeases Him; that it is also ingratitude toward the most loving of Fathers, ingratitude so much the greater as we have received more, and by it we refuse to give God an "accidental joy" which we ought to give Him. Our sins have increased the bitterness of the chalice that was offered to Christ in Gethsemane; He could address to us these words of the Psalmist: "For if My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it. . . . But thou a man of one mind, My guide and

cretely it is hard to say where lesser generosity ends and where negligence and sloth begin. Moreover, a soul that wishes truly to tend to perfection must remember that not only should it not fall back, but that it should not retard its ascent; indeed, its pace should be accelerated. As a stone falls more rapidly as it approaches the earth which attracts it, so souls ought to make more rapid progress toward God as they approach nearer to Him and He draws them more (Cf. St. Thomas, *In Ep. aa Hebr.,* 10:15).

In addition, imperfection disposes to venial sin, from the fact that one does not struggle as energetically as one should against the inclinations of egoism.

My familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with Me." [2] There we have indeed the motive for contrition with respect to God.

As regards ourselves, there is another motive: venial sin, though it does not of itself diminish charity, takes away its fervor, its liberty of action, and its radiation. Venial sin renders the divine friendship less intimate and less active. To lose the intimacy of a saint would be a great loss; but to lose the intimacy of our Savior is a far greater loss. Moreover, venial sin, especially if deliberate, causes evil inclinations to spring up again in us and thereby disposes us to mortal sin; and in certain matters the attraction to pleasure may easily cause us rapidly to cross the line which separates venial sin from mortal. We have here another motive for sincere contrition.

Confession thus practiced will, especially by virtue of absolution and the counsels of the priest, be a powerful means of purification and progress. Blessed Angela of Foligno, along with many others, exemplifies this purification and progress by means of confession. At the beginning of the book of her visions and instructions, the saint herself relates that when she first took cognizance of her sins she was greatly afraid, trembled at the thought of damnation, wept much, blushed for the first time, put off confessing them; nevertheless she went in this state to the holy table. She says:

With my sins I received the body of Jesus Christ. That is why my conscience did not cease to chide me day or night. I prayed to St. Francis to make me find the confessor I needed, someone who would be able to understand and to whom I could talk. . . . In the morning I found a friar who was preaching in the church of St. Felician. After the sermon I resolved to make my confession to him. I confessed my sins in full, I received absolution. I did not feel love, only bitterness, shame, and sorrow.

I persevered in the penance imposed on me; devoid of consolation, overwhelmed with sorrow, I tried to satisfy justice.

Then I looked for the first time at divine mercy; I made the acquaintance of that mercy which had withdrawn me from hell, which had given me the grace that I have related. I received its first illumination: my grief and tears redoubled. I gave myself up to severe penance. . . .

Thus enlightened, I perceived only defects in myself; I saw with en-

[2] Ps. 54:13 f.

tire certitude that I had deserved hell. . . . I received no consolation other than that of being able to weep. An illumination made me see the measure of my sins. Thereupon I understood that, in offending the Creator, I had offended all creatures. . . . Through the Blessed Virgin and all the saints I invoked the mercy of God and, knowing that I was dead, on my knees I begged for life. . . . Suddenly I believed that I felt the pity of all creatures and of all the saints. And then I received a gift: a great fire of love and the power to pray as I had never prayed. . . . I received a profound knowledge of the manner in which Christ died for my sins. I felt my own sins very cruelly, and I perceived that I was the author of the crucifixion. But as yet I had no idea of the immensity of the benefit of the cross. . . .

Then the Lord in His pity appeared to me several times, in sleep or in vigil, crucified: "Look," He said to me, "Look at My wounds." He counted the blows of the scourging and said to me: "It is for thee, for thee, for thee." . . . I begged the Blessed Virgin and St. John to obtain the sufferings of Jesus Christ for me, at least those which were given to them. They obtained this favor for me, and one day St. John so loaded me with them that I count that day among the most terrible of my life. . . . God wrote the *Pater Noster* in my heart with such an accentuation of His goodness and of my unworthiness that I lack words to speak of it.

By this very profound contrition, Blessed Angela entered on the way of sanctity. These great graces should draw our attention to the value of the aids which God offers us daily, to matters of import in the ordinary Christian life.

The Fruits of Confession

The fruits of confession are those of the virtues of humility and penance and especially those of sacramental absolution.

What truer and more indispensable act of humility is there than the sincere confession of sins committed? It is the remedy of the vice of pride, the root of all sin. Therefore heresy, which is the fruit of pride, suppressed confession, as we see in Protestantism. In a humble confession there is a beginning of atonement for sins of pride.

The act of penance, which is contrition, regrets sin, disavows it because it displeases God and separates us from Him. By contrition the soul is converted, turns back to the Lord from whom it had

turned away by mortal sin, or from whom it had strayed by venial sin. It draws near to Him and with confidence and love throws itself, so to speak, into the arms of mercy.

Above all, the blood of the Savior is sacramentally poured out on our souls by sacramental absolution. The Protestant never experiences, after committing sins that may torment him, the consolation of hearing the minister of God say to him in the name of the Lord, speaking in merciful judgment: *Ego te absolvo.* He has not the consolation of thus being able to apply to himself Christ's words to the apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." [3] On the contrary, by these words the blood of Christ is sacramentally poured out on our souls by absolution; it is like a salutary balm which, adding its power to that of the virtues of humility and penance, remits sins, greatly assists complete healing, and helps the soul to recover its lost strength.

"By confession," says St. Francis de Sales, "you not only receive absolution from venial sins you confess, but likewise strength to avoid them, light to discern them well, and grace to repair all the damage you may have sustained by them." [4]

We must not forget, however, that the effects of absolution are always in proportion to the excellence of the dispositions with which the sacrament is received. As St. Thomas says,® if a man who has five talents and loses them by mortal sin, has only sufficient contrition, he does not recover the merits lost in the degree that he had before his fall; he may recover three talents. If he has a more profound sorrow for his sins, he may again receive the five talents that he lost; or even, with a superior fervor of contrition, he will receive more, six, for instance. Such seems to have been the contrition of St. Peter after his denial of Christ; from that time on he was very generously faithful to grace, which led him even to martyrdom.

Among twenty people who go to confession, each receives a different measure of grace, for God discerns in each one's acts differ-

[3] John 20:23.

[4] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Bk. II, chap. 19.

®Cf. IIIa, q.89, a.2: "Now the intensity of the penitent's movement may be proportionate sometimes to a greater grace than that from which man fell by sinning, sometimes to an equal grace, sometimes to a lesser. Wherefore the penitent sometimes arises to a greater grace than that which he had before, sometimes to an equal, sometimes to a lesser grace: and the same applies to the virtues, which now from grace."

ences which no one on earth suspects. There are many different degrees of humility, contrition, and love of God, which are more or less pure and more or less strong. They are as so many degrees of intensity of a flame.

The same principles apply to sacramental satisfaction, the effect of which depends on the sacrament, at the same time being proportioned to the fervor with which it is accomplished. Sacramental satisfaction has thus more value than a satisfaction that is not sacramental, though the first may be more or less fruitful according to our generosity. It thus obtains for us in varying degrees the remission of the punishment due to forgiven sins. This satisfaction or penance should, therefore, not be put off to a later date, but performed at once, while we thank God for the grace of absolution. The blood of Jesus flowed over our soul to purify it; we should pray that He may grant us to remain in the state of grace and to die in this state. Only the saints have a profound understanding of the value of the blood of the Savior; this penetrating illumination on the depths of the mystery of the redemption is an immense grace.

Finally, it is fitting to accuse ourselves, at least in general, of the sins of our past life, especially of the most serious sins, in order to have a greater contrition for them so that the application of the merits of Jesus Christ to these sins, that have already been forgiven, may diminish the temporal punishment, which almost always remains after absolution. Let us also say with the Psalmist: "From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord." [6] Cleanse me, O Lord, from my secret sins that are indirectly voluntary by reason of my negligence to know and to will what I ought to know and will.

Confession made thus with a spirit of faith is manifestly a great means of sanctification. Our Lord said to St. Veronica Juliani: "Thou shalt make progress in perfection in proportion to the fruits which thou shalt draw from this sacrament."

In a little work on confession, St. Francis de Sales remarks: "Listen attentively . . . in order to hear in spirit the words of absolution that the Savior Himself pronounces in heaven over your soul . . . at the same time that His priest absolves you in His name here on earth." [7]

In the same work, he adds: "There is no character so untractable

[6] Ps. 18:13.
[7] *Pratique de la confession ordinaire,* § 4.

which, first of all by the grace of God, then by industry and diligence, cannot be subdued and conquered. For that reason, follow the orders and guidance of the prudent and zealous director." [8]

To conclude with St. Francis de Sales,[9] let us note that the sadness of true contrition, that is, displeasure with evil and detestation of it, is never a vexing, fretful sadness which depresses, but, on the contrary, it is a holy sadness that makes the soul prompt and diligent, that uplifts the heart by prayer and hope, that leads it to outbursts of fervor: "It is a sadness which in the height of its bitterness always produces the sweetness of an incomparable consolation, according to the precept of the great St. Augustine: 'The penitent should ever grieve and rejoice at his grief.' " [10]

If this sadness of contrition at the memory of past sins has this sweetness, it is because it springs from charity. The more a man grieves for his sins, the more certain it is that he loves God. This sadness, which is not vexation and melancholy, is good; it is compunction or lively sorrow for having sinned, sorrow in which are found the fruits of the Holy Ghost: namely, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity.[11]

[8] *Ibid.,* § 9.

[9] *Divers avis touchant la confession,* demande XXX.

[10] *De poenitentia,* chap. 13, quoted by St. Thomas, Illa, q.84, a.9 ad turn: "Whether penance can be continuous?"

[11] Gal. 5:22 f.

CHAPTER XXXI

Assistance at Mass, the Source of Sanctification

THE sanctification of our soul is found in a daily more intimate union with God, a union of faith, confidence, and love. Since this is true, one of the greatest means of sanctification is the highest act of the virtue of religion and of Christian worship, participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass. For every interior soul, the Mass ought each morning to be the eminent source from which spring the graces we need in the course of the day, the source of light and of warmth, similar, in the spiritual order, to the sunrise in the order of nature. After the night and sleep, which are an image of death, the sun reappearing each morning restores, so to speak, life to all that awakens on the surface of the earth. If we had a profound understanding of the value of daily Mass, we would see that it is like a spiritual sunrise that renews, preserves, and increases in our souls the life of grace, which is eternal life begun. Too often, however, the habit of assisting at Mass degenerates into routine for want of a spirit of faith, and then we no longer receive from the Holy Sacrifice all the fruits that we should. Yet the Mass ought to be the greatest act of each of our days, and in the life of a Christian, more notably of a religious, all other daily acts, especially all the other prayers and little sacrifices that we ought to offer to God in the course of the day, should be only the accompaniment of that act.

We shall consider here: (1) what constitutes the value of the Sacrifice of the Mass; (2) the relation of its effects to our interior dispositions; (3) the way we should unite ourselves to the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The Oblation Ever Living in the Heart of Christ

The excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, says the Council of Trent,[1] comes from the fact that it is the same sacrifice in substance as that of the cross, because it is the same Priest who continues to offer Himself by His ministers; it is the same Victim, really present on the altar, who is really offered; only the manner of offering differs: whereas on the cross there was a bloody immolation, there is in the Mass, in virtue of the double consecration, a sacramental immolation through the separation, not physical but sacramental, of the body and blood of Christ. Thus the blood of Jesus, without being physically shed, is sacramentally shed.[2]

This sacramental immolation is a sign[3] of the interior oblation of Christ, to which we should unite ourselves; it is also the memorial of the bloody immolation of Calvary. Although it is only sacramental, this immolation of the Word of God made flesh is more expressive than the bloody immolation of the paschal lamb and of all the victims of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, a sign draws its value as a sign from the grandeur of the thing signified: the flag, which reminds us of our country, even though it may be made of common material, has greater value in our eyes than the particular flag of a company or the insignia of an officer. Likewise the bloody immolation of the victims of the Old Testament, a remote figure of the sacrifice of the cross, expressed only the interior sentiments of the priests and faithful of the Old Law; whereas the sacramental immolation of the Savior on our altars expresses especially the interior oblation ever living in the heart of Christ "always living to make intercession for us."[4]

This oblation, which is the soul of the Sacrifice of the Mass, has an infinite value, which it draws from the divine person of the Word made flesh, principal Priest and Victim, whose immolation continues under a sacramental form. St. John Chrysostom writes:

1 Sess. XXII, chaps. 1 f.

2 Likewise the humanity of Christ remains numerically the same, but since His resurrection it is impassible, whereas before that it was subject to sorrow and death.

3 "The exterior sacrifice is in the nature of a sign, as a sign of the interior sacrifice."

4 Heb. 7:25.

"When you see the ordained priest at the altar raising the sacred host toward heaven, do not believe that this man is the true (principal) priest, but, raising your thoughts above what strikes the senses, consider the hand of Jesus Christ invisibly extended." [6] The priest whom we see with our eyes of flesh cannot penetrate all the depths of this mystery, but above him there is the intellect and will of Christ, the principal Priest. If the minister is not always what he should be, the principal Priest is infinitely holy; if the minister, even though very good, may be slightly distracted or occupied with the exterior ceremonies of the sacrifice, without penetrating their inmost meaning, there is above him One who is not distracted and who offers to God with full knowledge reparatory adoration of infinite value, supplication and thanksgiving of limitless power.

This interior oblation ever living in the heart of Christ is therefore, so to speak, the soul of the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the continuation of that oblation by which Jesus offered Himself as a victim on His entrance into this world and throughout the course of His earthly existence, especially on the cross. When Christ was on earth, this oblation was meritorious; now it continues without the modality of merit. It continues under the form of reparatory adoration and of supplication in order to apply to us the past merits of the cross. Even after the last Mass has been said at the end of the world, and when there will no longer be any sacrifice, properly so called, but only its consummation, the interior oblation of Christ to His Father will endure, no longer under the form of reparation and intercession, but under that of adoration and thanksgiving. We are made to foresee this by the *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,* which gives us some idea of the worship of the blessed in eternity.

How great our admiration would be, were it given to us to see without intermediary the love which inspires this interior oblation continuing unceasingly in the heart of Christ, "always living to make intercession for us"!

Blessed Angela of Foligno tells us: "I have not a vague thought, but the absolute certitude that if a soul saw and contemplated any of the intimate splendors of the sacrament of the altar, it would take fire, for it would see divine love. It seems to me that those who offer the sacrifice, or who take part in it, ought to meditate profoundly

[6] *Homil.* LX to the people of Antioch.

on the deep truth of the thrice holy mystery, in the contemplation of which we should remain motionless and absorbed." 6

The Effects of the Sacrifice of the Mass and Our Interior Dispositions

The interior oblation of Christ Jesus, which is the soul of the Eucharistic sacrifice, has the same end and the same effects as the sacrifice of the cross; but among these effects a distinction must be made between those that relate to God and those that concern us.

The effects of the Mass which relate immediately to God, such as reparatory adoration and thanksgiving, are always infallibly and wholly produced with their infinite value, even without our concurrence, even if the Mass, provided that it be valid, should be celebrated by an unworthy priest. From each Mass there rise thus toward God adoration and thanksgiving of limitless value, by reason of the dignity of the principal Priest who offers it and of the value of the Victim offered. This oblation pleases God more than all sins taken together displease Him; this is what constitutes the very essence of rhe mystery of the redemption in its aspect as satisfaction.7

The effects of the Mass which relate to us are poured forth on us only in the measure of our interior dispositions. It is thus that the Mass, as a propitiatory sacrifice, obtains *ex opere operato* for sinners who do not resist it the actual grace which leads them to repent and inspires them to confess their sins.8 The words *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis,* produce in sinners who oppose no obstacle sentiments of contrition, as the sacrifice of the cross produced them in the soul of the good thief. Here we are especially concerned with sinners who assist at Mass or with those for whom it is said.

The sacrifice of the Mass, as a sacrifice of satisfaction, also infallibly remits to repentant sinners at least a part of the temporal punishment due to sin. This remission is in proportion to the more or

6 *Livre de ses visions et instructions,* chap. 67.

7 Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, q.48, a. 2: "He properly atones for an offense who offers son,ething which the offended one loves equally or even more than he detested the offense."

8 Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, chap. 11: "Hujus quippe oblatione placatus Dominus, *gratiam et donum poenitentiae* concedens, *crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittit.*"

less perfect dispositions with which they assist at Mass. For this reason, says the Council of Trent, the Eucharistic sacrifice can also be offered for the deliverance of the souls in purgatory.[9]

Finally, as a sacrifice of impétration or supplication, the Mass obtains for us *ex opere operato* all the graces we need for our sanctification. It is the great enduring prayer for us of the ever-living Christ, accompanied by the prayer of the Church, His spouse. The effect of this double prayer is proportionate to our fervor, and he who unites himself with it to the best of his ability is sure to obtain the most abundant graces for himself and those dear to him.

According to St. Thomas and many theologians, the effects of the Mass which relate to us are limited only by the measure of our fervor.[10] The reason for this is that the influence of a universal cause is limited only by the capacity of the subjects that receive it. Thus the sun equally illumines and warms a thousand persons as well as it does one at one place. Now the Sacrifice of the Mass, being substantially the same as that of the cross, is, in its aspect as reparation and prayer, a universal cause of graces of light, attraction, and strength. Its influence on men is, therefore, limited only by the dispositions or the fervor of those who receive it. Thus a single Mass can be as profitable for a great number of persons as if it were offered for one alone among them; just as the sacrifice of the cross was not less profitable to the good thief than if it had been offered for him alone. If the sun warms a thousand persons at one place as well as a single one, the influence of the Mass, the source of spiritual warmth, is certainly not less in its order. The greater the faith, confidence, piety, and love, with which one assists at it, the greater are the fruits he draws from it.

All that we have said shows us why the saints, in the light of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, have always so greatly appreciated the Sacrifice of the Mass. Some, although infirm and ill, dragged them-

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, q.79, a. 5, a. 7 ad zum, where he says that there is no other limit indicated than that of the measure of our devotion: "secundum quantitatem seu modum devotionis eorum" (i.e., fidelium). Cajetan, *In Illam,* q.79, a.$. John of St. Thomas, *In Illam,* dis. 32, a.3. Gonet, *Clypeus ... De Eucharistia,* disp. 11, a.5, no. 100. Salmanticcnses, *De Eucharistia,* disp. XIII, dub. 6. We completely disagree with what has been written on this subject by Father de la Taille, *Esquisse du mystère de la foi* (Paris, 1924), p. 22.

selves to Mass because it is worth more than all treasures. On her way to Chinon, St. Joan of Arc importuned her companions in arms and, by dint of persistent entreaty, wrung from them a promise to assist daily at Mass. St. Germaine Cousin was so strongly attracted toward the church when she heard the bell announcing the Holy Sacrifice that she would leave her sheep in the care of the angels and run to assist at Mass: and her flock was always well guarded. The holy Curé of Ars spoke of the value of the Mass with such conviction that practically all of his parishioners assisted at it. Many other saints shed tears of love or fell into ecstasy during the Eucharistic sacrifice; some saw our Lord Himself, the principal Priest, in the place of the celebrant. Others, at the elevation of the chalice, saw the precious blood overflow, as if it were going to pour out over the arms of the priest into the sanctuary, and angels come with golden chalices to catch it, as if to carry it wherever there are men to be saved. St. Philip Neri, who received graces of this kind, used to celebrate Mass with only his server present, because of the raptures that often seized him at the altar.

How to Unite Ourselves to the Eucharistic Sacrifice

What St. Thomas says about attention in vocal prayer may be applied to assistance at Mass: "There are three kinds of attention that can be brought to vocal prayer: one which attends to the words, lest we say them wrong; another which attends to the sense of the words; and a third which attends to the end of prayer, namely, God, and to the thing we are praying for. This last kind of attention-is most necessary, and even uneducated persons are capable of it. Moreover, this attention, whereby the mind is fixed on God, is sometimes so strong that the mind forgets everything else." [1]

We may use different ways to assist well at Mass, with faith, confidence, true piety, and love. We can be attentive to the liturgical prayers, which are generally beautiful and full of unction, elevation, and simplicity. We can also recall the passion and death of the Savior, of which the Mass is the memorial, and think of ourselves as standing at the foot of the cross with Mary, John, and the holy women. Again, we can apply ourselves to rendering to God, in union

[1] Cf. IIa IIae, q.83, a. 13.

with Christ, the four duties that are the ends of the sacrifice: adoration, reparation, petition, and thanksgiving.[12] Provided we pray, even while piously saying the Rosary, we assist fruitfully at Mass. We may, like St. Jane de Chantal and many saints, with great profit continue our mental prayer during the Mass, especially if we are inclined to a pure and intense love, somewhat like St. John resting on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper.

But whatever way we follow the Mass, one important point must be insisted upon. We must, above all, unite ourselves profoundly with the oblation of Christ, the principal Priest; with Him we must offer Him to His Father, remembering that this oblation pleases God more than all sins displease Him. We should offer ourselves also more profoundly each day; offer particularly the trials and contradictions that we already have to bear and those that may present themselves in the course of the day. Thus at the offertory the priest says: *"In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito suscipiamur a te, Domine."*

The author of *The Imitation* rightly insists on this point. He has Christ say: "As I willingly offered Myself to God the Father for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the cross, even so oughtest thou willingly to offer thyself to Me daily in the Mass, as intimately as thou canst with thy whole energies and affections, for a pure and holy oblation. . . . Whatsoever thou givest except thyself, I regard not; for I seek not the gift but thyself. . . . But if thou wilt stand upon self, and not offer thyself freely to My will, thy offering is not complete, nor will there be an entire union between us."[13]

In the following chapter, the faithful soul replies: "Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, I offer myself to Thee this day, as Thy servant for evermore. . . . Receive me with this sacred oblation of Thy precious body. . . . I offer also to Thee all my good works, though very few and imperfect, that Thou mayest amend and sanctify them. . . . I offer to Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons; the necessities of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all those that

12 The first part of the Mass up to the Offertory inspires us with sentiments of penance and contrition *{Confiteor, Kyrie eleison),* of adoration and gratitude *(Gloria in excelsis),* of petition (collect), of living faith (Epistle, Gospel, Credo), in order to prepare us for the offering of the holy Victim, which is followed by Communion and thanksgiving.

13 *The imitation,* Bk. IV, chap. 8.

are dear to me. . . . I offer up also to Thee prayers and this sacrifice of propitiation for them in particular who have in any way injured me or have inflicted upon me any hurt or injury; and for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, oppressed, or scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and mutual offenses. . . . Grant us so to live that we may be worthy to enjoy Thy grace and that we may attain unto life everlasting." [14]

The Mass thus understood is a fruitful source of sanctification, of ever new graces; by it Christ's prayer may be better realized for us daily: "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one: I in them, and Thou in Me; that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved Me." [15]

Our visit to the Blessed Sacrament should remind us of the morning's Mass, and we should call to mind that though there is no sacrifice, properly so called, for it ceases with the Mass, Christ really present in the tabernacle continues to adore, to pray, and to give thanks. At every hour of the day we ought to unite ourselves to our Savior's oblation. As the prayer to the Eucharistic heart says: "He is patient in waiting for us, eager to hear and grant our prayers. He is the fountain of ever new graces, the refuge of the hidden life, the master of the secrets of divine union." In the presence of the tabernacle, we ought "to be silent in order to listen to Him, and leave ourselves in order to lose ourselves in Him."

[14] *Ibid.*, chap. 9.
[15] John 17:22 f.

CHAPTER XXXII

Holy Communion

THE soul tending to Christian perfection ought to live more and more by the Eucharist, not only by assistance at Mass but by frequent and even daily Communion. This is our reason for speaking of this living bread and of the conditions of a good and then of a fervent Communion.

The Eucharist, the Living Bread Come Down from Heaven

For the salvation of all of us in general, our Lord could not have given Himself more than He did on the cross; and He cannot give Himself to each one of us in particular more than He has done in the Eucharist. Because He knew our deepest spiritual needs, He said to us in His promise of the Eucharist: "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to Me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed. . . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." [1]

The Eucharist is thus the greatest of the sacraments, for it contains not only grace, but the Author of grace. It is the sacrament of love, because it is the fruit of love that gives itself and because it has for its principal effect to increase in us the love of God and of souls in God.

The reception of the Eucharist is called Communion, or the intimate union of the heart of God with the heart of man. This union nourishes the soul and supernaturally vivifies it more and more and, so to speak, deifies it, by increasing in it sanctifying grace, which is

[1] John 6:35, 51 f., 56 f.

a participation in the inner life of God: "For My flesh is meat indeed."

All created life needs to be fed: plants draw their nourishment from the secretions of the earth; animals feed on plants or other living creatures; man nourishes his body with material and appropriate food; he nourishes his mind with truth, especially divine truth; he should nourish his will with the divine will to be accomplished daily in order to reach eternal life. In other words, man ought to find his nourishment especially in faith, hope, and love. The acts of these virtues obtain for him, through merit, an increase in supernatural life.

But the Savior offers him still another and more divine food; He offers Himself as the food of souls. To St. Augustine, Christ said: "I am the food of the strong; grow and thou shalt feed on Me. But thou shalt not convert Me into thyself as the nourishment of thy body, but thou shalt be changed into Me." [2]

In Communion, the Savior has nothing to gain: it is the soul that receives, that is vivified, supernaturalized; the virtues of Jesus Christ pass into it; it is, as it were, incorporated in Him and becomes a more living member of His mystical body.

How is this incorporation and transformation effected? Especially because Christ, present in the Eucharist, leads the soul to a purer and stronger love of God.

The effects of this food are well explained by St. Thomas, who says: "This sacrament works in man the effect which Christ's passion wrought in the world." [3] Then he adds: "This sacrament does for the spiritual life all that material food does for the bodily life, namely, by sustaining, giving increase, restoring, and giving delight." [4]

First of all, it sustains. He who in the natural order does not take food or who takes insufficient food, declines; in the spiritual order the same is true of the man who refuses the Eucharistic bread which the Lord offers us as the best food for our soul. Why deprive ourselves, without reason, of this "supersubstantial bread," [5] which it; the daily bread of our souls?

[3] *Confessions,* Bk. VII, chap. io.
[4] Cf. Illa, 0.79, a. 1.
[5] *ibid.*
[6] Matt. 6:11.

As material bread restores the organism by repairing its losses, the results of labor and fatigue, so the Eucharist repairs the gradual loss of strength which results from our negligences. As the Council of Trent says, it frees us from venial sins, restores to us the fervor which we lost because of these sins, and preserves us from mortal sin.

Moreover, ordinary nourishment increases the life of the body in a growing child. Now, from the spiritual point of view, we ought always to grow in the love of God and of our neighbor until death; thus we advance in our journey toward eternity. That we may grow in this way, the Eucharistic bread always brings us new graces. Thus supernatural growth does not stop in the saints as long as they continue on their way toward God: their faith becomes daily more enlightened and more lively, their hope more firm, their charity more pure and ardent. Little by little they advance from resignation in suffering to the esteem and love of the cross. Through Communion all the infused virtues grow with charity; and through ever more fervent Communions, they may reach a heroic degree. The gifts of the Holy Ghost, being permanent, infused dispositions connected with charity, also grow with it.

Lastly, as material bread is pleasant to the taste, the Eucharistic bread is sweet to the faithful soul, which draws from it a comfort and sometimes a spiritual well-being that is more or less felt.

The author of *The Imitation* says: "Confiding, O Lord, in Thy goodness and in Thy great mercy, I come as a sick man to my Savior, hungry and thirsty to the fountain of life, needy to the King of heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, and one in desolation to my loving Comforter." [6] "Give Thyself to me, and it is enough; for without Thee no comfort is of any avail. Without Thee I cannot exist; and without Thy visitation I am unable to live." [7]

St. Thomas admirably expresses the mystery of Communion:

> "O *res mirabilis, manducat Dominum*
> *Pauper, servus, et humilis!"*

Communion is the sublime union of supreme wealth and poverty. And yer, how sad it is that habit, degenerating into routine, often prevents us from being attentive to the supernatural splendor of this infinite gift!

[6] Bk. IV, chap. j.
[7] *Ibid.,* chap. 3.

Conditions of a Good Communion

The conditions of a good communion are indicated in the decree (December 20, 1905) by which Pope Pius X exhorted all the faithful to frequent Communion. This decree recalls first of all this principle: "The sacraments of the New Law, while acting *ex opere operato,* nevertheless produce a greater effect by reason of the more perfect dispositions of those who receive them. . . . Care must be taken, therefore, that an attentive preparation precede Holy Communion and that a suitable thanksgiving follow it, taking into consideration the faculties and condition of each person."

According to the same decree, the first and indispensable condition for drawing profit from Communion is an upright and pious intention. On this point His Holiness declared: "Frequent and daily Communion, greatly desired by Jesus Christ and by the Catholic Church, should be so accessible to all the faithful of every rank and condition, that anyone who is in the state of grace and approaches the holy table with an upright and pious intention, may not be separated from it by any prohibition. Upright intention consists in this: that he who approaches the holy table is not influenced by custom, by vanity, or by any human reason, but desires to satisfy the good pleasure of God, to be more closely united to Him by charity, and by means of this divine medicine to remedy his infirmities and defects."

Evidently the upright and pious intention mentioned here must be supernatural, that is, inspired by a motive of faith; it is the desire to acquire the strength to serve God better and to keep from sin. If, with this principal intention, a person had a secondary intention of vanity, such as the desire to be praised, this secondary and nondeterminant motive would not prevent the Communion from being good and would not render it bad, but it would diminish its fruit. This fruit is so much the greater as the upright and pious intention is purer and stronger. These principles are positive. One very fervent Communion is, therefore, more fruitful in itself alone than many tepid Communions.

The Conditions of a Fervent Communion

In her *Dialogue,* St. Catherine states the conditions of a fervent Communion by using a striking figure:

If thou hast a light, and the whole world should come to thee in order to take light from it, the light itself does not diminish, and yet each person has it all. It is true that everyone participates more or less in this light, according to the substance into which each one receives the fire. Suppose that there are many who bring their candles, one weighing an ounce, others two or six ounces, or a pound, or even more, and light them in the flame; in each candle, whether large or small, is the whole light, that is to say, the heat, the color, and the flame; nevertheless thou wouldst judge that he whose candle weighs an ounce has less of the light than he whose candle weighs a pound. Now the same thing happens to those who receive this sacrament. Each one carries his own candle, that is, the holy desire with which he receives this sacrament, which of itself is without light, and lights it by receiving this sacrament.[8]

How is this desire shown? The holy desire, which is the condition of a fervent Communion, should manifest itself first in removing all attachment to venial sin, slander, jealousy, vanity, sensuality, and so on. This attachment is less reprehensible in poorly enlightened Christians than in those who have already received much and are ungrateful. If this negligence and ingratitude were to become accentuated, they would render Communion less and less fruitful.

That Communion may be fervent, attachment to imperfections must be combated; that is, attachment to an imperfect manner of acting, such as characterizes the actions of one who, possessing five talents, acts as if he had only three *{modo remisso)*, and only struggles feebly against his defects. Attachment to imperfections may also be found in the seeking after permissible but useless natural satisfactions, such as taking some refreshment which one can get along without. The sacrifice of these satisfactions would be agreeable to God; and the soul, by thus evidencing greater generosity, would receive many more graces in Communion. It ought to remember that it has as a model Christ Himself, who sacrificed Himself even to the death of the cross, and that it ought to work for its salvation and that of its neighbor by means similar to those which the Savior employed. The removal of venial sin and imperfection is a negative disposition.

The positive dispositions for a fervent Communion are humility *{Domine, non sum dignus),* a profound respect for the Eucharist, a living faith, an ardent desire to receive our Lord, the bread of life.

[8] *The Dialogue,* chap, i io.

All these positive conditions may be summed up as hunger for the Eucharist.

All food is good when we are hungry. A rich man, accidentally deprived of food and famished, is happy to find black bread; he thinks it is the best meal of his life and he feels refreshed. If we hungered for the Eucharist, our Communion would be most fruitful. We should recall what this hunger was in St. Catherine of Siena; so great was it that one day when she had been harshly refused Communion, a particle of the large host became detached at the moment when the priest broke it in two, and was miraculously brought to the saint in response to the ardor of her desire.

How can we have this hunger for the Eucharist? The answer lies in our being firmly convinced that the Eucharist is the indispensable food of our soul and in generously making some sacrifices every day.

For those who are feeble, substantial food is sought which will restore their health; efforts are also made to raise the morale of the discouraged. The food par excellence, which renews spiritual strength, is the Eucharist. Our sensible appetites, inclined to sensuality and to sloth, need to be vivified by contact with the virginal body of Christ, who endured most frightful sufferings for love of us. We, who are always inclined to pride, to lack of consideration, to forgetfulness of the greatest truths, to spiritual folly, need to be illumined by contact with the sovereignly luminous intellect of the Savior, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Our will also has its deficiencies; it lacks energy, it is cold because it lacks love. This is the cause of all its weaknesses. Who can restore to it the ardor, the flame necessary to its life so that it may ascend instead of descending? The answer is contact with the Eucharistic heart of Jesus, ardent furnace of charity, immutably fixed in the good, and source of merits of infinite value. Of its plentitude we must all receive, and grace for grace. We have great need of this union with the Savior, which is the principal effect of Communion.

If we were profoundly convinced that the Eucharist is the necessary food of our souls, we would have the spiritual hunger which is found in the saints.

To recover it, if we have lost it, we must "take exercise," as they say to people who are stricken with a languorous illness. Spiritual exercise in this case consists in daily offering sacrifices to God; in particular we should give up seeking ourselves in what we do;

gradually, as egoism disappears, charity will take the first, uncontested place in our souls. We will cease to be preoccupied with the little nothings that concern us in order to think more of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Then the hunger for the Eucharist will return. To make a good Communion, we should also ask Mary to make us share in the love with which she herself received the Eucharist from the hands of St. John.

The fruits of a fervent Communion are proportionate to the generosity of our dispositions. We read in Holy Scripture: "He that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound." [9] In the Office of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Thomas relates that the prophet Elias, who was being persecuted, stopped worn out in the desert and lay down under a juniper tree to await death. He fell asleep; then an angel of the Lord wakened him, showed him a loaf of bread under the ashes, and a jug of water. He ate and drank, and with the strength that this food gave him, he walked for forty days, even to Mount Horeb, where the Lord was waiting for him. This is a figure of the effects of fervent Communion.

We should remember that each of our Communions ought to be substantially more fervent than the preceding one, since each ought not only to preserve charity in us, but to increase it, and consequently dispose us to receive our Lord on the following day with an even greater love than on the preceding day. As a stone falls so much the more rapidly as it approaches the earth which attracts it, so, says St. Thomas,[10] souls ought to advance so much the more rapidly toward God as they approach nearer to Him and are more drawn by Him. This law of acceleration, which is at one and the same time a law of nature and a law of the order of grace, ought to be verified especially by daily Communion. It would be verified if some attachment to venial sin or to imperfection placed no obstacle to it. We see it realized in the lives of the saints, who make much more rapid progress during the last years of their lives than during the earlier years. This is notably true of the end of St.

[9] Matt. 13:12.

[10] Cf. *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos,* 10:25: "The natural motion (e.g., of a falling stone) grows the more (in proportion) as it more nearly approaches its end. The contrary is true of violent motion (e.g., of a stone cast into the air). Grace likewise follows the motion of nature. Therefore those who are in the state of grace ought to grow more in proportion as they draw nearer to their end."

Thomas' life. Such acceleration in progress toward God was realized above all in Mary, the model of Eucharistic devotion; each of her Communions was certainly more fervent than the preceding one.

God grant that there may be in us at least a remote resemblance to this spiritual progress, and that, if sensible fervor is lacking, substantial fervor, which is the promptness of the will in the service of God, may not fail.

The author of *The Imitation* says: "For who, humbly approaching the fountain of sweetness, does not carry thence some little sweetness? Or who, standing by a great fire, does not derive therefrom some little heat? And Thou art a fountain ever full and overflowing; Thou art a fire always burning and never failing." [11]

This source of graces is so lofty and so fruitful that the properties of refreshing water and the opposite qualities of burning fire may be compared to it. What is divided in material things is united in the spiritual life, and especially in the Eucharist, which contains not only abundant grace, but the very Author of grace.

In our Communions let us think of St. John, who rested his head on the heart of Christ, and of St. Catherine of Siena, who more than once drank long draughts from the wound of His heart, which is ever open in order to show us His love. These extraordinary graces are given by God from time to time to draw our attention to what is most intrinsic and fruitful in daily Christian life, to what would exist in ours if we only knew how to answer God's call with generosity.

Examination of Conscience

COMMUNIONS WITHOUT THANKSGIVING

"If thou didst know
the gift of God!"
John 4:10

A number of interior souls have told us of the sorrow they feel when they see, in certain places, almost the entire body of the faithful leave the church immediately after the end of the Mass during which they have received Holy Communion. Moreover, this custom is becoming general, even in many Catholic boarding schools

11 Bk. IV, chap. 4

and colleges where formerly the students who had received Communion remained in the chapel for about ten minutes after Mass, thus acquiring the habit of making a thanksgiving, a habit which the best among them kept all their lives.

Formerly to show rhe necessity of thanksgiving, people were told how St. Philip Neri had two altar boys, carrying lighted candles, accompany a lady who left the church immediately after the end of the Mass during which she had received Holy Communion. How many times this well deserved lesson was told, and how often it bore fruit! But nowadays people have acquired the habit of treating almost everybody, superiors as well as equals and inferiors, and even our Lord Himself, with easy familiarity. If this abuse continues, there will be, as someone has said, many Communions and few real communicants. If zealous souls do not set to work to stop this habit of unconcern, it will go on increasing, gradually destroying all spirit of mortification and of true and solid piety. And yet Christ Himself is ever the same, and our duty of gratitude toward Him has not changed.

Is not thanksgiving for a favor received a duty, and ought it not be proportionate to the value of the favor? When we give something valuable to a friend, we are rightfully grieved if that person does not take the trouble to send us a word of thanks. Yet this fault is frequent today. And if this easy carelessness, which borders on ingratitude, wounds us, what must be said of ingratitude toward our Lord, whose gifts are incomparably more precious than ours?

When, after the miraculous cure of the ten lepers, only one of them returned to thank our Lord, He asked: "And where are the other nine?" They had been miraculously healed, but did not return to express their thanks.

In Communion we receive a gift far superior to the miraculous cure of a physical disease; we receive the Author of salvation and an increase of the life of grace, which is the seed of glory, or eternal life begun. We receive an increase of charity, the highest of the virtues, which vivifies, animates all the others, and is the very principle of merit.

Christ often gave thanks to His Father for all His benefits, in particular for that of the redemptive Incarnation; with all His soul He thanked His Father for having revealed its mystery to little ones. On the cross He thanked Him while uttering His *Consum-*

matum est. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, of which He is the principal Priest, He does not cease to thank Him. Thanksgiving is one of the four ends of the sacrifice, always united to adoration, petition, and reparation. Even after the end of the world, when the last Mass has been said and when there will no longer be any sacrifice, properly so called, but only its consummation, when supplication and reparation have ceased, the worship of adoration and thanksgiving will endure forever, expressed in the *Sanctus,* which will be the song of the elect for all eternity.

With these thoughts in mind, we can easily understand why for some time many interior souls have been having Masses offered in thanksgiving, particularly on the second Friday of the month, in order to make up for the ingratitude of men and of many Christians, who scarcely know any more how to give thanks, even after receiving the greatest benefits.

If there is one favor, however, which demands a special act of thanksgiving, it is the institution of the Eucharist, through which Christ willed to remain substantially among us that He might continue in a sacramental manner the oblation of His sacrifice, and that He might give Himself to us as food to nourish our souls in a better and more substantial way than the best of food can nourish our body. Here it is not a question of feeding our minds on the thought of a St. Augustine or of a St. Thomas, but of feeding ourselves on Jesus Christ, on His humanity, on the plenitude of grace in His holy soul, personally united to the Word and to the Divinity. By the Eucharist, He gives Himself to us that he may assimilate us to Himself. Blessed Nicholas of Fliie used to say: "Lord Jesus, take me from myself and give me to Thyself." Let us add: "Lord Jesus, give Thyself to me, that I may belong entirely to Thee." The Blessed Eucharist is the greatest gift we can receive; surely it deserves a special thanksgiving. This is the purpose of the devotion to the Eucharistic heart.

If an author who offers you a good book is rightly offended when he receives no expression of thanks from you, much more painful is the ingratitude of one who fails to return thanks after Communion, by which Christ gives Himself to us.

Have the faithful who leave the church almost immediately after receiving Holy Communion forgotten that the Real Presence subsists in them as sacramental species for about a quarter of an hour

after Communion, and can they not keep their divine Guest company for this short time? [12] Christ calls us, He gives Himself to us with infinite love, and yet we have nothing to say to Him and are not willing to listen to Him for a few moments.

Bossuet used to recall that the saints, in particular St. Teresa, have often told us that sacramental thanksgiving is the most precious moment in our spiritual life.[13] The essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass is indeed in the double consecration, but it is by Communion that we ourselves share in this sacrifice of infinite value. As a result of our Communion, contact is established between the holy soul of Jesus, personally united to the Word, and our soul, an intimate union of His human intellect, illumined by the light of glory, with our intellect, which is often darkened, clouded, forgetful of our great duties, in some measure obtuse in regard to divine things. A no less profound union of the human will of Christ, immutably fixed in the good, is also established with our wavering, inconstant will; and finally, a union of His most pure sensibility with ours, which at times is so troubled. In Christ's sensibility are the two virtues of fortitude and virginity, which strengthen and render virginal the souls that draw near to Him.

But Christ speaks only to those who listen to Him, only to those who are not voluntarily distracted. We should not only reproach ourselves for our directly voluntary distractions, but also for those which are indirectly so, as a result of our negligence in not considering what we ought to consider, in not willing what we ought to will, in not doing what we ought to do. This negligence is the source of a multitude of sins of omission, which pass almost unseen in our examination of conscience, because they are not something positive, but rather the absence of what should be. Many persons who find no sin in themselves, because they have committed no grievous sins, are full of sins of omission, sins of indirectly voluntary and consequently culpable negligence.

12 We are not speaking here of truly pious people who, by reason of some necessity, must leave the church shortly after Communion in order to fulfill a real duty.

13 On this point consult the beautiful life of the foundress of the Cenacle, Mother Marie Thérèse Couderc: *Une grande humble,* by Father Pcrroy, S.J., p. 195: "When I have received Holy Communion," she said to her superior, "it is impossible for me to leave the chapel. The time devoted to thanksgiving by the community seems so short that I must do myself violence to follow the sisters to the refectory."

Let us not neglect the duty of thanksgiving, as is so often done today. What fruits can be derived from Communions received with so little respect?

Unfortunately in some countries many priests themselves make, so to speak, no thanksgiving after their Mass. Others confound their thanksgiving with the obligatory and more or less recollected recitation of a part of the Office, with the result that they no longer have enough personal piety to vivify from within the official piety, as it were, of the minister of God. The results are sad indeed. How can the priest who no longer sufficiently nourishes the life of his own soul with the divine life, give it to others? How can he relieve the profound spiritual needs of souls that are famished, and who, after having recourse to him, sometimes go away sadder than ever, asking themselves anxiously where they can find what they require? Souls that hunger and thirst for God, souls that have received much and that, in the midst of great difficulties, should give abundantly to those about them in order to assist souls that are dying spiritually, are sometimes told: "Do not take so much trouble. You do more than is necessary." We may well wonder what is to become of zeal, of the ardor of charity, and how Christ's words are to be verified: "I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?" "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly."

A truly pious person who used to reproach himself for not thinking sufficiently during the day of Holy Communion which he had received that morning, once received this reply to his expressed concern: "We do not think of the meal that we had some hours ago." That was the reply of practical naturalism, which lost sight of the immense distance separating the Eucharistic bread from ordinary bread. The state of mind evinced by such a statement is manifestly the direct opposite of the contemplation of the mystery of the Eucharist: it springs from the habitual negligence with which one receives God's most precious gifts. In the long run, a person no longer sees their value, which he knows only in a theoretical manner, and the counsels that he gives in no way lead souls to intimate union with God; they do not go beyond the level of casuistry, which is concerned only with knowing what is obligatory in order to avoid sin.

This state of soul can lead far; one can thus forget that every

Christian, each according to his condition, must tend to the perfection of charity in virtue of the supreme precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." [14]

Were they to follow this path, the priest and religious would also forget that they have not only a general, but a special obligation to tend to perfection in order that they may daily perform their sacred functions with greater holiness and be more closely united to our Lord.

In certain periods of the history of monastic orders, some religious, after celebrating their private Mass, did not go to the conventual Mass even on feast days, unless it was canonically indisputable that they were obliged to do so. If they had made their thanksgiving in a proper manner, would they have reached the point of judging in this fashion? Casuistry tended to prevail over spirituality, which was considered a secondary matter. That day on which we consider intimate union with God as something secondary, we no longer tend to perfection; we lose sight of the meaning and the import of the supreme precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Our judgment is then no longer the judgment of wisdom; it no longer proceeds in any way from the gift of wisdom; we have begun to descend the slope of spiritual folly. This is the goal progressively reached through negligence in making a proper thanksgiving.

Remissness in regard to thanksgiving becomes negligence in adoration, which would end by being only exterior, negligence also in supplication and in reparation. We would thus more and more lose sight of the four ends of the sacrifice in order to give ourselves often to secondary matters which, moreover, lose their true moral and spiritual value as soon as they are no longer vivified by union with God.

Every benefit calls for an expression of gratitude; a measureless benefit demands a proportionate acknowledgment. Since we are not capable of offering God gratitude proportionate to His gift, we should ask Mary Mediatrix to come to our help and to obtain for us a share in the thanksgiving she offered to God after the sacrifice of the cross, after the *Consummatum est,* a share in the thanksgiving

14 Luke 10:27.

she made after St. John's Mass, which truly continued in substance on the altar the sacrifice of Calvary. Negligence so frequent in thanksgiving after Communion springs from our insufficient knowledge of the gift of God: "If thou didst know the gift of God!" Let us ask our Lord humbly but ardently for the grace of a great spirit of faith, which will permit us daily to realize the value of the Eucharist a little better. Let us ask for the grace of the supernatural contemplation of this mystery of faith, that is, the experimental knowledge which proceeds from the gifts of understanding and wisdom, and which is the cause of a fervent thanksgiving in the measure in which we are more conscious of the greatness of the gift received.[15]

15 We may recall what characterized the thanksgiving of the pilgrim saint, Benedict Joseph Labre, who was often ravished and transfigured by the contemplation of Christ present in the Eucharist.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Prayer of Petition

WE HAVE spoken of the purification of the soul by the sacraments, by sacramental confession, assistance at Mass, and frequent Communion. We shall now discuss the purification of the soul in beginners through prayer. First of all, we shall speak of the efficacy of the prayer of petition in general, then of liturgical prayer, which is the psalmody, and of the spirit which ought to animate it, finally of the mental prayer of beginners. We shall begin with the most general principles.

The Necessity of a Strong Belief in the Efficacy of Prayer

The question of the efficacy of prayer interests all souls without distinction: those who are beginning, those who have made progress, and even those in the state of mortal sin, for though the sinner who has lost sanctifying grace cannot merit, he can always pray.

Merit, being a right to a reward, is related to divine justice;[1] prayer, on the other hand, is addressed to divine mercy, which often hears and grants it and lifts up the soul without any merit on its part; thus it raises up souls that have fallen into the state of spiritual death. The most wretched man, from the depths of the abyss into which he has fallen, can utter this cry to mercy, which is prayer. The beggar who possesses nothing but his poverty can pray in the very name of his wretchedness, and, if he puts his whole heart into his petition, mercy inclines toward him; the abyss of wretchedness calls to that of mercy. The soul is raised up, and God is glorified. We should recall the conversion of Magdalen; let us also

[1] Merit *de condigno* is based on justice; merit *de congruo,* on the rights of friendship.

remember the prayer of Daniel for Israel: "Thou hast executed true judgments in all the things that Thou hast brought upon us . . . for we have sinned and committed iniquity. . . . Deliver us not up forever, we beseech Thee, for Thy name's sake." [2] The psalms are filled with these petitions: "But I am needy and poor; O God, help me. Thou art my helper and my deliverer: O Lord, make no delay." [3] "Help us, O God, our Savior; and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us: and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake." [4] "Thou art my helper and my protector: and in Thy word I have greatly hoped. . . . Uphold me according to Thy word, and I shall live: and let me not be confounded in my expectation." [6]

Do we believe in the power of prayer? When temptation threatens to make us fall, when light does not shine in us, when the cross is hard to carry, do we have recourse to prayer, as Christ advised us to? De we not doubt its efficacy, if not in principle at least in practice? Yet we know Christ's promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you." [8] We know the common teaching of theologians: that true prayer, by which we ask for ourselves with humility, confidence, and perseverance the graces necessary for our salvation, is infallibly efficacious.[7] We know this doctrine, and yet it seems to us at times that we have truly prayed without being heard.

We believe in, or rather we see, the power of a machine, of an army, of money, and of knowledge; but we do not believe strongly enough in the efficacy of prayer. The power of that intellectual force which is knowledge, we see by its results; there is nothing very mysterious about it, for we know whence this power comes and approximately whither it goes. It is acquired by human means and produces effects that remain within human limits. If, on the con-

[2] Dan. 3:28 f., 34.
[3] Ps. 69:6.
[4] Ps. 78:9.
[5] Ps. 118:114, 116.
[6] Matt. 7:7.
[7] Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q.83, a. 15 ad zum: "Four conditions are laid down: namely, to ask (1) for ourselves (z) things necessary for salvation (3) piously, (4) pcrscveringly; when all these four concur, we always obtain what we ask for." And likewise of the sinner's prayer, he says *(ibid.,* a. 16): "God hears the sinner's prayer if it proceeds from a good natural desire, not out of justice, because the sinner does not merit to be heard, but out of pure mercy, provided, however, he fulfills the four conditions given above, namely, that he beseech for himself things necessary for salvation, piously and persevcringly."

trary, prayer is in question, we believe too weakly in it, because we do not know clearly whence it comes and we forget whither it is going.

Let us recall the source of the efficacy of prayer and the end to which it is ordained, what it ought to obtain; in other words, its first principle and its end.

The Source of the Efficacy of Prayer

The sources of rivers are high up; the waters of the heavens and the fountain of the snows feed their streams. A river is first a torrent which descends from the mountains before irrigating the valley and casting itself into the sea. This is a figure of the loftiness of the source of the efficacy of prayer.

At times we seem to believe that prayer is a force which should have its first principle in ourselves, one by which we would try to bend the will of God by persuasion. Immediately our thought encounters the following difficulty, often formulated by unbelievers, in particular by the deists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: namely, no one can move, no one can bend the will of God. God is indeed Goodness which asks only to give itself, Mercy ever ready to come to the help of him who suffers. But God is also perfectly immutable Being. The divine will is from all eternity as immovable as it is merciful. No one can boast of having enlightened God, of having made Him change His will: "I am the Lord, and I change not." § By the decrees of Providence, the order of tilings and of events is strongly and gently established from all eternity.§ Must we conclude from this, with fatalism, that prayer can do nothing, that it is too late, that whether we pray or not, what is to happen will happen?

The words of Holy Scripture remain, and the interior life must ever penetrate them more deeply: "Ask, and it shall be given you:

§ Mai. 3:6.

§ This divine immutability is often affirmed, and in a beautiful manner, in Holy Scripture: "God is not a man . . . that He should be changed" (Num. 23:19). "The heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest: and all of them shall grow old like a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps. 101:26-28). "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (Jas. 1:17).

seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you." [10]

Prayer is not, in fact, a force having its first principle in us; it is not an effort of the human soul, trying to do violence to God in order to make Him change His providential dispositions. Such a manner of speaking, which is used occasionally, is a metaphorical, human way of expressing oneself. In reality, the will of God is absolutely immutable, but this superior immutability is precisely the source of the infallible efficacy of prayer.

Fundamentally it is very simple in spite of the mystery of grace involved in it. We have here a combination of the clear and the obscure that is most captivating and beautiful. First of all, we shall consider what is clear: true prayer is infallibly efficacious because God, who cannot contradict Himself, has decreed that it should be.[11] This is what the contemplation of the saints examines profoundly.

A God who would not have willed and foreseen from all eternity the prayers that we address to Him, is a conception as puerile as that of a God who would change His plans, bowing before our will.

Not only all that happens has been foreseen and willed (or at least permitted) in advance by a providential decree, but the way things happen, the causes which produce events; all is fixed from all eternity by Providence. For material harvests, God prepared the seed, the rain that must help it to germinate, the sun that will ripen the fruits of the earth. Likewise for spiritual harvests, He has prepared spiritual seeds, the divine graces necessary for sanctification and salvation. In all orders, from the lowest to the highest, in view of certain effects God prepares the causes that must produce them.

Prayer is precisely a cause ordained to produce this effect: the obtaining of the gifts of God. All creatures exist only by the gifts of God, but the intellectual creature alone can realize this. Existence, health, physical strength, the light of the intellect, moral en-

10 Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9; Mark 11:24.

11 Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.83, a.2: "Divine providence disposes not only what effects shall take place, but also from what causes and in what order these effects shall proceed. Now, among other causes, human acts are the causes of certain effects. Wherefore it must be that men do certain actions, not that thereby they may change the divine disposition, but that by those actions they may achieve certain effects according to the order of the divine disposition: and the same is to be said of natural causes. And so is it with regard to prayer. For wc pray, not that wc may change the divine disposition, but that wc may impetrate that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers."

ergy, success in our enterprises, all is the gift of God; but especially is this true of grace which leads to salutary good, causes it to be accomplished, and gives strength to persevere. Grace and, even more, the Holy Ghost who has been sent to us and who is the source of living water, is the gift par excellence which Christ spoke of to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee: Give Me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." [12]

The intellectual creature alone is able to realize that it can live naturally and supernaturally only by the gift of God. Must we, then, be astonished that divine Providence has willed that man should ask for alms, since he can understand that he lives only on alms?

Here, as elsewhere, God wills first of all the final effect; then He ordains the means or the causes which must produce it. After having decided to give, He decides that we shall pray in order to receive, as a father, who has resolved in advance to bestow a pleasure on his children, purposes to make them ask for it. The gift of God is a result; prayer is the cause ordained to obtain it. St. Gregory the Great says: "Men ought by prayer to dispose themselves to receive what Almighty God from eternity has decided to give them." [13] Thus Christ, wishing to convert the Samaritan woman, led her to pray by saying to her: "If thou didst know the gift of God!" In the same way, He granted Magdalen a strong and gentle actual grace which inclined her to repentance and to prayer. He acted in the same manner toward Zacheus and the good thief. It is, therefore, as necessary to pray in order to obtain the help of God, which we need to do good and to persevere in it, as it is necessary to sow seed in order to have wheat. To those who say that what was to happen would happen, whether they prayed or not, the answer must be made that such a statement is as foolish as to maintain that whether we sowed seed or not, once the summer came, we would have wheat. Providence affects not only the results, but the means to be

12 John 4:10, 13 f.

13 *Dialogues,* Bk. I, chap. 8. This passage is quoted by St. Thomas in IIa IIae, q.83, a. z.

employed, and in addition it differs from fatalism in that it safeguards human liberty by a grace as gentle as it is efficacious, *fortiter et suaviter.* Without a doubt, an actual grace is necessary in order to pray; but this grace is offered to all, and only those who refuse it are deprived of it.[14][15]

Therefore prayer is necessary to obtain the help of God, as seed is necessary for the harvest. Even more, though the best seed, for lack of favorable exterior conditions, can produce nothing, though thousands of seeds are lost, true, humble, trusting prayer, by which we ask for ourselves what is necessary for salvation, is never lost. It is heard in this sense, that it obtains for us the grace to continue praying.

The efficacy of prayer well made is infallibly assured by Christ: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. . . . And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" [16] To the apostles He also says: "Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name." [18] Prayerful souls ought more than all

[14] To every adult, though he may be a great sinner, is offered the efficacious grace to pray. How? Every man receives from time to time the actual grace which renders prayer really possible for him. In this sufficient grace is offered efficacious help, as fruit in the flower. But if man resists this grace, called sufficient grace, he merits to be deprived of efficacious grace, which would make him pray effectively. We are face to face here with the mystery of grace, which can be expressed in the following terms: if resistance to grace, which is an evil, comes solely from our defectibility, non-resistance, which is a good, comes first of all from God, the primary source of all good. And as the love of God for us is the cause of all good, no one would be better than another if he were not more loved by God. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (I Cor. 4:7.) Cf. St. Thomas, la, q.20, a.3 f.

Christ said (John 15:5): "Without Me you can do nothing" in the order of salvation. This is an additional reason to beg Him to grant us grace as He recommends us to do. If, therefore, after sincerely praying with humility, confidence, and perseverance, we did not obtain the helps necessary to salvation, there would be contradiction in the very heart of God and in His promises. These immutable promises are the basis of the infallible efficacy of prayer well made.

[15] Luke 11:9-13.

[,e] John 16:23 f.

others to live by this doctrine, which is elementary for every Christian; by living it, one discovers its depths.

Let us, therefore, have confidence in the efficacy of prayer. It is not only a human force which has its first principle in us; the source of its efficacy is in God and in the infinite merits of Christ. It descends from an eternal decree of love, it reascends to divine mercy. A fountain of water rises only if the water descends from an equal height. Likewise when we pray, it is not a question of persuading God, of inclining Him to change His providential dispositions; rather we have only to lift our will to the height of His in order to will with Him in time what He has decided from all eternity to grant us. Far from tending to bring the Most High down toward us, "prayer is a lifting up of the soul toward God," as the fathers say. When we pray and are heard, it seems to us that the will of God inclines toward us; on the contrary, it is ours which rises; we begin to will in time what God willed for us from all eternity.

Hence, far from being opposed to the divine governance, prayer cooperates in it. We are two who will instead of one. And when, for example, we have prayed much in order to obtain a conversion and have been heard, we can say that it is certainly God who converted this soul, but who deigned to associate us with Him and from all eternity had decided to make us pray that this great grace might be obtained.

Thus we cooperate in our salvation by asking for ourselves the graces necessary to attain it; among these graces, some, such as that of final perseverance, cannot be merited,[17] but are obtained by humble, trusting, and persevering prayer. Likewise, efficacious grace, which preserves us from mortal sin and keeps us in the state of grace, is not merited; otherwise we would merit the very principle of merit (the continued state of grace); but it can be obtained by prayer. Moreover, the actual and efficacious grace of loving contemplation, although, properly speaking, not merited *de condigno,* is obtained by prayer: "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me." [18]

17 The grace of final perseverance is, in fact, the state of grace continuing until death; but the state of grace, being the principle of merit, cannot be merited. Cf. St. Thomas, Ia Hac, q. 114, a. 9: "Whether a man may merit perseverance."

18 Wisd. 7:7.

Even when we are trying to obtain the grace of conversion for another, who perhaps resists it, the greater the number of persons who pray and the more each one perseveres in prayer, the more hope there is of obtaining this grace of conversion. Prayer thus greatly cooperates in the divine governance.

The Particular Petitions We Should Make

We have just seen the nature of the first principle of the efficacy of prayer. We shall now consider the end to which it is ordained by God, what it can obtain for us.

The end to which Providence has ordained prayer as a means, is the obtaining of the gifts of God necessary to sanctification and salvation; for prayer is a cause which has its place in the life of souls, as heat and electricity have their place in the physical order. Now the end of the life of the soul is eternal life, and the goods which direct us to it are of two kinds: spiritual goods, which lead us to it directly; and temporal goods, which can be indirectly useful to salvation in the measure in which they are subordinated to the first.

Spiritual goods are habitual and actual grace, the virtues, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and merits, the fruits of the virtues and of the gifts. According to what we have just said, humble, trusting, persevering prayer is all-powerful to obtain for the sinner the grace of conversion and for the just man actual grace that he may persevere in the performance of his duties. Prayer, made under the same conditions, is all-powerful to obtain for us also a more lively faith, a firmer hope, a more ardent charity, a greater fidelity to our vocation. The first petition we should make, as the Our Father points out, is that the name of God may be sanctified, glorified by a radiating faith; that His kingdom may come is the object of hope; that His will may be done, fulfilled with love, by an ever purer and stronger charity.

Moreover, prayer can obtain our daily bread for us in the measure in which it is necessary or useful for salvation, the supersubstantial bread of the Eucharist and the suitable dispositions to receive it well. Besides, prayer obtains for us the pardon of our sins and disposes us to pardon our neighbor; it preserves us from temptation or gives us the strength to triumph over it.

To accomplish all this, prayer must have the indicated condi-

tions: it must be sincere, humble (it is a poor man who is asking), trusting in the infinite goodness, which it must not doubt, persevering, in order to be the expression of a profound desire of our hearts. Such was the prayer of the woman of Canaan, whom the Gospel mentions and to whom Christ said: "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it done to thee as thou wilt." [19]

Even if the Lord leaves us contending with great difficulties from which we have prayed Him to deliver us, we must not believe that we are not heard. The simple fact that we continue to pray shows that God is helping us, for without a new actual grace we would not continue to pray. He leaves us to battle with these difficulties in order to inure us to warfare. He wishes to show us that the struggle is profitable for us and that, as He said to St. Paul in similar circumstances, the grace granted us suffices to continue a struggle in which the very strength of the Lord, which is the source of ours, is more clearly shown: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." [20] We see this especially in the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit, which are at times a spiritual tempest, in which we must continually ask for efficacious grace, which alone can prevent us from weakening.

In regard to temporal goods, prayer can obtain for us all those which should, in one way or another, assist us in our journey toward eternity: our daily bread, health, strength, the success of our enterprises. Prayer can obtain everything, on condition that over and above all else we ask God for greater love of Him: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [21] If we do not obtain these temporal goods, it is because they are not useful to our salvation; if our prayer is well made, we obtain a more precious grace in place of them.

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him." [22] And the prayer of petition, if it is truly a lifting up of the soul to God, prepares the soul for a more intimate prayer of adoration, reparation, and thanksgiving, and for the prayer of union.

19 Matt. 15:28.
20 Cf. II Cor. 12:9.
21 Matt. 6:33.
22 Ps. 144:18.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Liturgical Prayer

ONE of the greatest means of union with God for the religious soul is the psalmody, which in religious orders is the daily accompaniment of the Mass. The Mass is the great prayer of Christ; it will continue until the end of the world, as long as He does not cease to offer Himself by the ministry of His priests; as long as from His sacerdotal and Eucharistic heart there rises always the theandric act of love and oblation, which has infinite value as adoration, reparation, petition, and thanksgiving. The psalmody of the Divine Office is the great prayer of the Church, the spouse of Christ; a day and night prayer, which ought never to cease on the surface of the earth, as the Mass does not.

For those who have the great honor to take part in the chant, the psalmody should be an admirable school of contemplation, of self-oblation, of holiness. That it may produce these abundant fruits, the psalmody should keep what is its very essence; it ought to have not only a body which is well organized according to harmonious rules, but also a soul. If it ceases to be the great contemplative prayer, it gradually loses its soul and, instead of being a soaring, a rising toward God, and a repose, it becomes a burden, a source of fatigue, and no longer produces great fruits. Therefore we shall discuss briefly first of all deformed and materialized chant, then true psalmody, which is a deliverance, like the chant of the Church, above all the noises of earth.

Deformed Psalmody

Deformed psalmody is a body without a soul. Generally, it is marked by unseemly haste, as if undue haste, which, according to St. Francis de Sales, is the death of devotion, could replace true and

profound life. The words of the Office are badly pronounced without rhythm or measure. The antiphons, which are often beautiful, are poorly said and become unintelligible, the hymns even more so. The lessons which are not punctuated as they should be, are read as one would read the most indifferent or even the most boring passages, when, as a matter of fact, they are concerned with the splendors of divine wisdom or what is most beautiful in the lives of the saints. People wish to save time, four or five minutes which they will devote to worthless trifles, and they lose the best of the time given by God. Father de Condren used to say: "If a master spoke to his servant as a number of people speak to God while saying the Divine Office, the servant would think that his master was insane to be jabbering in such fashion."

As a result of haste, the psalmody of which we are speaking is mechanical and not organic; just as in a body without a soul, the members are no longer vitally united, but only placed together. The Office becomes a series of words following one another. The great meaning of a psalm is no longer comprehended; to one who is trying to grasp this meaning and to follow it, this mechanical chant brings fatigue and is an obstacle to true prayer.

Is this manner of chanting a lifting of the soul toward God? Perhaps, but it is a uniformly retarded elevation, like the movement of a stone that has been thrown into the air and tends to fall back; whereas true prayer ought, like a flame, to tend spontaneously toward heaven.

What remedies can be applied to this evil? The remedy is to be found in recalling the rules for the chant. But this remedy is not effective if it alone is applied. The evil is deeper, and we must go to its roots. In reality, there is only one truly effective remedy that makes possible the utilization of the others: namely, the restoration of the spirit of prayer. Similarly, in order to restore functions to a body without a soul, life would have to be restored to it.

Deformed psalmody shows us that, for a soul which has no personal life of prayer, the recitation of the Office becomes altogether material, a wholly exterior worship. Not possessing the habit of recollection, this soul is assailed by thoughts foreign to the Office; its work, studies, or business affairs keep returning to its memory, and at times even thoroughly vain thoughts come. The most interior persons sometimes experience this distress. But in the case of

those we are speaking of, it is a habitual state of negligence, and in them distraction does not remain in the imagination; it invades the higher faculties. How can anyone in this state taste the divine words of the psalms, the prophets, the Epistles, the most beautiful pages of the fathers and of the lives of the saints which are daily offered to us in the Divine Office? All these spiritual beauties remain unperceived like colorless and insipid objects. The great poetry of the Psalmist and the most profound cries of his heart become spiritless and monotonous. One day in choir, St. Bernard saw above each religious his guardian angel who was writing down the chant. The manner of writing differed greatly, however: some wrote in letters of gold, others in silver, while still others wrote with ink or with colorless water; one angel held his pen poised and wrote nothing. Routine mummifies the most profoundly living passages and reduces them to mechanically recited formulas. This manner of chanting is nothing but practical nominalism, a sort of materialism in action. The higher faculties do not live in a prayer made thus; they remain somnolent or scattered. A person may still hear the symphony of the Office, more beautiful than the most famous symphonies of Beethoven, but for lack of an interior feeling, he can no longer appreciate it. Often the Divine Office is studied from the historical point of view, or from the canonical point of view of strict obligations, and these distinctions are held to; but it is especially from the spiritual point of view that it must be considered and lived.

Contemplative Chant

What should the contemplative chant be? This chant is distinguished precisely by the spirit of prayer, or at least by the aspiration which inclines us to it, which desires it, seeks it, and at length obtains it. We are thus shown how much the contemplation of the mysteries of faith is in the normal way of sanctity: this contemplation alone can give us in liturgical prayer the light, peace, and joy of the truth tasted and loved, *gaudium de veritate.*

The spirit of prayer, more intimately drawn from mental prayer, is lost as soon as one hurries to finish daily prayer, as if it were not the very respiration of the soul, spiritual contact with God, our Life. It was in the spirit of prayer that the psalms were conceived:

without it, we cannot understand them or live by them. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." [1]

If the psalmody has this spirit, then in place of mechanical haste, which is a superficial life, we find profound life for which we do not need continually to recall liturgical rules, for these rules are merely the expression of its inner inclinations. Then, without excessive slowness the words are well pronounced, undue haste is avoided, and the pauses, serving as a vital rest between aspiration and respiration, are observed. The antiphons are tasted, and the soul is truly nourished with the substance of the liturgical text. Whoever has the duty of reading the lessons, which are often most beautiful, should look them over ahead of time in order not to spoil their meaning. He who reads the lessons well avoids a too evident expression of his personal piety, but the great objective meaning of Scripture explained by the fathers remains intelligible, and here and there he grasps its splendors in the midst of its divine obscurities. No effort is made to save four or five minutes, and he ceases to lose the precious time given by God. He is even led at the end of the chant to prolong prayer by some moments of mental prayer, like the religious in bygone days who, at night after Matins and Lauds, spent some time in profound recollection. Many times in the history of their lives mention is made of these secret prayers, of this heart to heart conversation with God in which they often received the greatest lights, which made them glimpse what they had sought till then during hours and hours of labor. When this spirit of prayer prevails, real life begins, and one understands that mental prayer gives the spirit of the chant; whereas the psalmody furnishes to mental prayer the best possible food, the very word of God, distributed and explained in a suitable manner, according to the cycle of the liturgical year, according to the true time, which coincides with the single instant of immobile eternity.[1]

Such prayer is no longer mechanical, but organic; the soul has returned to vivify the body; prayer is no longer a succession of words; we are able to seize the vital spirit running through them. Without effort, even in the most painful hours of life, we can taste

[1] Ps. 41:2.

[2] Cf. Dom Gréa, *La sainte liturgie,* chapters on the Divine Office, the chant of the Church, the spouse of Christ.

the admirable poetry of the psalms and find in them light, rest, strength, renewal of all energies. Then truly this prayer is a lifting up of the soul toward God, a lifting up that is not uniformly retarded, but rather accelerated. The soul burns therein and is consumed in a holy manner like the candles on the altar.

St. Thomas Aquinas deeply loved this beautiful chant thus understood. It is told of him that he could not keep back his tears when, during Compline of Lent, he chanted the antiphon: "In the midst of life we are in death: whom do we seek as our helper, but Thou, O Lord, who because of our sins art rightly incensed? Holy God, strong God, holy and merciful Savior, deliver us not up to a bitter death; abandon us not in the time of our old age, when our strength will abandon us." This beautiful antiphon begs for the grace of final perseverance, the grace of graces, that of the predestined. How it should speak to the heart of the contemplative theologian, who has made a deep study of the tracts on Providence, predestination, and grace!

The chant, which prepares so admirably for Mass and which follows it, is one of the greatest means by which the theologian, as well as others, may rise far above reasoning to contemplation, to the simple gaze on God and to divine union. The theologian who has spent a long time over his books in a positive and speculative study of revelation, in the refutation of numerous errors and the examination of many opinions relating to the great mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the life of heaven, needs, after such study, to rise above all this bookish knowledge; he needs profound recollection, truly divine light, which is superior to reasoning and gives him the spirit of the letter which he has studied. Otherwise he grows spiritually anaemic and, because of insufficient contact with the light of life, he cannot give it adequately to others. His work remains too mechanical, not sufficiently organized and living, or it may be that the governing idea of his synthesis has not been drawn from a high enough source; it lacks amplitude, life, radiation, and little by little it loses its interest. The theologian needs often to find the living and splendid expression of the mysteries that he studies in the very words of God, such as the liturgy makes us taste and love: "Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet." §

The word of God, which is thus daily recalled to us in prayer,

•Ps. 33:9.

is to its theological commentary what a simple circumference is to the polygon inscribed in it. We must forget the polygon momentarily in order to enjoy a little and in a holy manner the beauty of the circle, which the movement of contemplation follows, as Dionysius used to say. This is found during the chant, if mechanical haste is not substituted for the profound life which ought to spring from the fountain. The body of the chant must be truly vivified by the spirit of prayer.

There is great happiness in hearing the Divine Office thus chanted in many monasteries of Benedictines, Carthusians, Carmelites, Dominicans, and Franciscans. This prayer attracts good vocations, whereas the other, because it is materialized, drives them away. When we hear the great contemplative prayer in certain cloisters, we feel the current of the true life of the Church; it is its chant, both simple and splendid, which precedes and follows the sublime words of the Spouse: the Eucharistic consecration. We are made to forget all the sorrows of this world, all the more or less false complications and all the tiresome tasks imposed by human conventions. God grant that the chant may ever remain thus keenly alive day and night in our monasteries! It has been noticed that when it ceases at night in those convents where it should go on, the Lord raises up nocturnal adoration to replace it, for living prayer ought not to cease, and prayer during the night, by reason of the profound silence into which everything is plunged and for many other reasons, has special graces of contemplation: *Oportet semper orare.*

The chant thus understood is the holy repose which souls need after all the fatigues, agitations, and complications of the world. It is rest in God, rest that is full of life, rest which from afar resembles that of God, who possesses Flis interminable life *tota simul,* in the single instant which never passes, and which at the same time measures supreme action and supreme rest, *quies in bono amato.*

We may define the mutual relations of mental prayer and the Divine Office by saying that from mental prayer the Office receives the habit of recollection and the spirit of prayer. On the other hand, mental prayer finds in liturgical prayer an abundant source of contemplation and an objective rule against individual illusions. The Divine Office cures sentimentality by continually recalling the great truths in the very language of Scripture; it reminds presumptuous souls of the greatness and severity of divine justice, and it also re-

minds fearful souls of infinite mercy and the value of the passion of Christ. It makes sentimental souls live on the heights of true faith and charity, far above sensibility.

It will suffice here to recall one example among many: the tract from the Mass for Quadragesima Sunday taken from psalm 90: "He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector and my refuge: my God, in Him will I trust. For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters and from the sharp word. He will overshadow thee with His shoulders: and under His wings thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day . . . or of the noonday devil. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. . . . For He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. . . . He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days; and I will show him My salvation."

The liturgy recalls all the ages of the spiritual life by the joyful mysteries of the childhood of the Savior, by His passion, and by the glorious mysteries; it thus gives true spiritual joy which enlarges the heart: "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." [4] It prepares the soul for the more intimate and silent prayer of meditation.

[4] Ps. 118:32.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Mental Prayer of Beginners Its Progessive Simplification

> "Pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."
>
> Matt. *6:6*

IN OUR discussion of the efficacy of prayer in general and of the Divine Office, we saw that prayer is a lifting up of the soul to God, by which we will in time what God wills from all eternity that we should ask of Him: namely, the various means of salvation, particularly progress in charity: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [1] The prayer of petition should be accompanied by adoration, reparation, and thanksgiving. These are the sentiments we should have when we say the Divine Office. But we feel the need of a more intimate prayer, in which our soul, more profoundly recollected, comes into contact with the Blessed Trinity dwelling in us, a contact which is necessary that we may receive from the interior Master that light of life which alone can make us penetrate deeply and taste the mysteries of salvation: those of the redeeming Incarnation, of the Sacrifice of the Mass, of eternal life toward which we are traveling. This light of life is also necessary to reform our character by spiritualizing and supernaturalizing it, by rendering it more conformable to Him who invites us to seek peace of soul in humility and meekness. This more intimate prayer is mental prayer.

We shall see, first of all, what the mental prayer of beginners

[1] Matt. 6:33.

should be. In the following chapter we will explain how to attain to a life of prayer and persevere in it.

The Nature of Mental Prayer; Our Attitude Toward Methods

In the Gospel, Christ tells us: "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. . . . But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee." [2]

In a statement that is both simple and profound, St. Teresa says: "Mental prayer is nothing else, in my opinion, but being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with Him who, as we know, loves us." [3] Genuinely simple and pure Christian souls have always been acquainted with this completely spontaneous and intimate prayer. A peasant who was questioned by the Curé of Ars on his manner of prayer, defined it admirably by saying: "I look at our Lord who is in the tabernacle, and He looks at me." This is indeed the commerce of friendship, by which the soul converses alone with God by whom it believes itself loved. This interior prayer, which was so often that of the first Christians in the catacombs, has always existed in profoundly humble and religious souls eager for God. The royal Psalmist was, most certainly, profoundly acquainted with this prayer when he wrote: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" [4]

What is simpler than prayer? Its spontaneity is, however, taken away at times by the use of excessively complicated methods, which draw too much attention to themselves and not enough to God, whom the soul should seek. A method is good as a way of finding the truth, on condition that it can be forgotten and that it lead truly to the end toward which one tends. To prefer the method to the truth, or a certain intellectual mechanism to reality that should be known, would be a manifest aberration, similar to that of the me-

2 *Ibid.,* 5 f.
3 *Life,* chap. 8.
4 Ps. 41:1 f.

ticulous man or of the pedant. Moreover, an over-complicated method provokes a reaction, and even an excessive reaction in some who, worn out by this complexity, often end up in a vague reverie that has scarcely any true piety about it except the name.

The truth, here as elsewhere, is to be found in the middle and above these two extreme, opposite deviations. A method, or to speak more simply with Bossuet, a manner of making prayer, is useful, especially at the beginning, to preserve us from mental rambling. But that it may not by its complexity become an obstacle rather than a help, it must be simple, and, far from breaking the spontaneity and continuity of prayer, it should be content with describing the ascending movement of the soul toward God. It should be limited to indicating the essential acts of which this movement is composed. We should remember especially that prayer depends principally on the grace of God, and that a person prepares for it far less by processes that would remain mechanical, so to speak, than by humility; "God . . . giveth grace to the humble." [6]

The Essential Acts of Prayer

What are the essential acts of prayer? First of all, prayer is not only an act of the intellect, like a simple study or reading. There are speculative souls who are curious about the things of God, but they are not for that reason contemplative souls, souls of prayer. If in their considerations they taste a pleasure which far exceeds that of the senses, this pleasure comes perhaps more from their knowledge than from their charity; they are moved more by the love of knowledge, it may be, than by the love of God. St. Thomas, who distinguishes between these two loves, says that in prayer it is the second which should lead the intellect to the knowledge of God, with the purpose of loving Him more.[6] In this statement is a holy

[6] Jas. 4:6.

[e] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 180, a. 1: "Now the appetitive power moves one to observe things either with the senses or with the intellect, sometimes for love of the thing seen because, as it is written (Matt. 6:21), 'where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also'; sometimes for love of the very knowledge that one acquires by observation. Wherefore Gregory *(Hom. XIV in Ezech.)* makes the contemplative life to consist in the charity of God, since through loving God we are aflame to gaze on His beauty. And since everyone delights when he obtains what he loves, it follows that the contemplative life terminates in delight, which is seated in the affective power, the result being that love also becomes more intense."

realism, that which is observed in the knowledge of the servants of God.

The pleasure which is born, not of the love of God but of the love of knowledge, often increases pride and makes souls love themselves more; they seek themselves without being aware of it. Study and speculation, even when they do not err, do not necessarily presuppose the state of grace and charity, and do not always cooperate in increasing it.

Prayer, on the contrary, should proceed from the love of God and should end in Him. Through love of God, one seeks to contemplate Him, and the contemplation of His goodness and His beauty increases love. We read in *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena: "Knowledge must precede love, and only when she has attained love, can she strive to follow and to clothe herself with the truth." [7] In the same work, we read: "With this (supernatural) light the souls in the unitive state love Me, because love follows the intellect, and the more it knows the more it can love. Thus the one feeds the other." [8]*

Moreover, as St. Thomas says,[8] here on earth the love of God is more perfect than the knowledge of God; charity is more perfect than faith. Why is this? Because knowledge, as it were, draws God down to us and imposes on Him the bounds of our limited ideas, whereas love draws us toward God, lifts us up toward Him, unites us to Him.[10] Besides, as long as we are deprived of the beatific vision, it is chiefly by charity that union with God is made; this is why perfection consists especially in charity, which ought to have the uncontested first place in our soul.[11] This is equivalent to saying that in prayer the soul should rise toward God on the two wings of the intellect and the will, aided by the influence of grace. Prayer is, therefore, a wholly supernatural movement of knowledge and love.

7 Chap. i.

8 Chap. 85.

0 Cf. la, q.8z, a. 3: The love of God is better than the knowledge of God; Ila Ilae, q.27, a.4: "Whether God can be loved immediately in this life." "Charity loves God immediately, and other things through God. . . . With regard to knowledge, it is the reverse."

10 The reason for this is that the good, the object of love, is in things, in reality exterior to ourselves, in this case in God Himself. On the contrary, the true formally considered, that is, the conformity of our judgment with the real, is in ourselves. Cf. St. 1'homns, *ibid.*

11 *Ibid.,* q. 184, a. 1; lit Ilae, q.6rt, n.6.

Hence we can readily enumerate the essential acts of prayer. To be this lifting up of the whole soul toward God, prayer must be prepared for by an act of humility and proceed from the three theological virtues, which unite us to God, animate the virtue of religion, and obtain for us the lights and inspirations of the Holy Ghost. The generous soul flies, so to speak, like a bird by the effort of its wings, but the breath of the Holy Ghost sustains this effort and rather often bears the soul farther aloft than it could go by its own virtues. Not in vain are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost found in all the just without exception.12*

We shall consider these various acts of prayer. In the perfect, they are often simultaneous and continuous; but to describe them, we must enumerate them one after the other, as they present themselves in beginners.

Normally we should begin our prayer with an act of humility, for it is fitting that, when about to converse with God, we should recall what we are. Let us think of our Lord's words to St. Catherine of Siena: "I am who am, thou art she who is not." Of ourselves we are nothing, and even less than nothing, because our sins are a disorder inferior to nothingness itself. This act of humility is normally accompanied by an act of repentance and an act of adoration, like that which prompts the genuflection made on entering a church. These acts remove pride, the chief obstacle to grace, and this true humility, far from depressing us, reminds us that in a fragile vessel we bear a precious treasure, sanctifying grace and the Blessed Trinity dwelling in us. Thus begun, prayer does not proceed from vain sentimentality, but from the life of grace, which is immensely superior to our sensibility.

After this act of humility, we should make a profound and prolonged act of faith in some fundamental truth or other: God, His perfections, His goodness, or Christ, the mysteries of His life, His

12 Prayer, under the name of discursive meditation, has at times been transformed into an exercise which seems to be an act of prudence, foreseeing what must be done, rather than the union of the acts of the three theological virtues, which find their nourishment in God alone. Doubtless it is fitting in prayer to give a place to the resolution inspired by faith, which directs prudence from above, but prayer should not be transformed into an examination of conscience or an exercise in foresight. We must maintain here in a practical manner the superiority of the rheological virtues, among which charity excels especially under the form of the love of God, which is superior to love of neighbor, although the second may be the great indication of the first.

passion, His glory, or again our great duties, our vocation, our last end, sin, the duties of our state to be accomplished with ever greater holiness. These subjects should recur. On feast days the liturgy itself gives us the subject. If the feast commemorates a mystery in the life of Christ, such as that of His passion, we should consider it first of all under its sensible aspect, then under its spiritual aspect, dwell on what makes its infinite value, rest in this gaze of fruitful faith. For this consideration and adherence of faith, some words of the Gospel or of the liturgy often suffice. For more advanced souls, they are like grains of incense on the fire of charity. It is not necessary to reason much; the simple act of theological faith is superior to reasoning, and becomes more and more a simple gaze, which, when accompanied by admiration and love, merits the name of contemplation. This infused faith, superior to all philosophy and to the discursive work of theology, makes us adhere infallibly and supernaturally in obscurity to the mysteries which the elect contemplate openly in heaven. As St. Paul says, it is "the substance of things to be hoped for." [13] Its obscurity does not hinder it from being infallibly sure. It is the first light of our interior life. "*Credo in unum Deum.* . . And at a given moment, this *Credo* seems almost to become a *video,* as if we saw from afar the fountain of living water to which our soul aspires.

This gaze of faith on the truth and goodness of God gives spontaneous rise to an act of hope. The soul desires beatitude, eternal life, the peace promised by the heavenly Father to those who follow Jesus Christ. But we know for a certainty that by our own natural powers we shall never reach this supernatural end. Then we have recourse to the infinitely helpful goodness of God and beg Him for His grace. Petition, inspired by hope, relies on the divine help.[14] Having said *Credo,* the soul spontaneously says: *desidero, sitio, spero,* I desire, I thirst, I hope. Having glimpsed from afar the fountain of living water, the soul desires to reach it that it may there drink long draughts, "as the hart panteth after the fountains of water." [15]

But the act of hope, in its turn, disposes us to an act of charity.[18]

[13] Hcb. 11:1.

[14] The formal motive of hope is the all powerful and helpful divine goodness: *Deus auxilims. Cf.* Ha I Inc. q. 17, a.4.

[»'] Ps. 41:1.

As, indeed, St. Thomas says: "From the fact that man hopes to obtain a benefit from God, he is led to think that God, his benefactor, is good in Himself (and better than His gifts). This is why hope disposes us to love God for Himself." [18]

Thus, the act of charity rises spontaneously in us, at first under an affective form. If, in these affections, our sensibility offers its help to the will vivified by charity, it may be useful on condition that it remain subordinate. But this help is not necessary; it disappears in aridities. Here we need a calm but profound affection, which is surer and more fruitful than superficial emotions. It consists in saying: "My God, I no longer wish to lie when I tell Thee that I love Thee. Grant me to love Thee and to please Thee in all things." *"Diligo te, Domine, ex toto corde."*

This affective charity should finally become effective: "I wish to conform my will to the divine will. May Thy will be accomplished in me by fidelity to the commandments and to the spirit of the counsels. I wish to break all that renders me the slave of sin, of pride, of egoism, and of sensuality. I wish, O Lord, to share more and more in the divine life that Thou dost offer me. Thou hast come that we may have life in abundance. Increase my love for Thee. Thou dost ask only to give; I wish to receive as Thou dost wish that I should receive, in trial as well as in consolation; whether Thou comest to associate me with the joyful mysteries of Thy childhood or the sorrowful mysteries of Thy passion, for they all lead to the glorious life of eternity. Today I resolve to be faithful on a certain point that I have often neglected. *Volo."* As St. Teresa [17] suggests, the *Pater noster* may be slowly meditated in this manner.

Here, in this culminating point of prayer, the fruit of the theological virtues, the knowledge of faith, the love of hope, and that of charity tend, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to fuse in a gaze of faithful and generous love, which is the beginning of contemplation: Christian contemplation which bears on God and the humanity of Christ, as the contemplation of the artist on nature, and that of a mother on the countenance of her child.

This prayer begins to penetrate and to taste the mysteries of salvation: the nature of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls, the mystical body of Christ, and the communion of the saints.[18]

[18] Cf. la Ilae, q.62, a.4.
[17] *The Way of Perfection,* chaps. 27-38.

Gradually it introduces us into the intimacy of Christ, the intimacy of love. Nothing can better correct our defects of character, give us a lively desire to resemble Him who said to us: "Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls." Prayer thus made renders our hearts more and more like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for one imitates, even without being aware of it, those whom one loves truly and deeply. There are difficult characters who will succeed in reforming themselves only by the loving contemplation of Christ in prayer.

These ideas should give us a better understanding of St. Teresa's definition of prayer, which we quoted at the beginning of the chapter and repeat here: "Mental prayer is nothing else, in my opinion, but being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with Him who, as we know, loves us."

The Prayer of Simplicity

In proportion as the soul grows, the acts of humility, faith, hope, and charity, which we have enumerated, tend, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to fuse in a gaze of ardent love. Hence a simple method, useful at the beginning, should gradually give place to docility to the Holy Ghost, who breathes where He will. Prayer thus tends to become a prolonged spiritual communion, as the peasant of Ars, whom we quoted above, defined it: "I look at our Lord, and He looks at me." The prayerful soul says much in a few words, which he often says over and over without ever repeating himself. This prolonged spiritual communion is like the breathing of the soul or its repose in God; by faith and hope it breathes in the truth and goodness of God, and it breathes out love. What the soul receives from God under the form of ever new graces, it gives back to Him under the form of adoration and love.

Consequently, to ask for the grace of Christian contemplation is to ask that the bandage of pride, which still covers the eyes of the spirit, may fall away completely in order that we may be able truly to penetrate and taste the great mysteries of salvation: that of the sacrifice of the cross perpetuated by the Mass, that of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the food of our soul.

Surely without any danger of quietism, Bossuet invites us to this simplified affective prayer in his substantial little work, *Manière*

courte et facile pour faire l'oraison en foi, et de simple présence de Dieu. We shall quote the principal part.

A person must become accustomed to nourish his soul with a simple and loving gaze on God and on Jesus Christ our Lord; and to this end, it must be gently separated from reasoning, discourse, and the multitude of affections, in order to hold it in simplicity, respect, and attention, and thus to bring it nearer and nearer to God, its unique, sovereign Good, its first principle and last end.

The perfection of this life consists in union with our sovereign Good; and the greater the simplicity, the more perfect also is the union. This is why grace interiorly solicits those who wish to be perfect to become simple that they may finally be rendered capable of the enjoyment of the one thing necessary, of eternal unity. . . . *Unum mihi est necessarium, Deus meus et omnia!* . . .

Meditation is very good in its time and very useful at the beginning of the spiritual life; but we should not stop there, since the soul, by its fidelity in mortifying and recollecting itself, ordinarily receives a purer and more intimate prayer, which may be called the prayer of simplicity. This prayer consists in a simple view, a gaze on God, on Jesus Christ, or on one of His mysteries. Therefore, leaving reasoning behind, the soul makes use of a sweet contemplation which holds it peaceful, attentive, and susceptible to the divine operations and impressions which the Holy Ghost communicates to it. It does little and receives much . . . and, as it draws nearer to the source of all light, grace, and virtue, it is also proportionately expanded. . . .

We should observe that this true simplicity makes us live in a continual death and a perfect detachment, because it makes us go to God with perfect uprightness, without pausing over any creature. However, this grace of simplicity is not obtained by speculation, but by a great purity of heart and true mortification and self-contempt; whoever flees suffering, humiliation, and death to self will never enter it. This is also the reason why there are so few who advance in it, because hardly anyone wishes to give up self; arid unless he does so, he experiences great losses and deprives himself of incomprehensible goods. . . . Fidelity which makes one die to self prepares . . . for this excellent type of prayer. . . .

The enlightened soul dearly esteems the guidance of God, who allows it to be exercised by creatures and overwhelmed by temptations and abandonment. . . . After the purgation of the soul by the purgatory of sufferings, through which one must necessarily pass, will come illumination, rest, and joy through intimate union with God.

The purgatory of sufferings, which Bossuet speaks of here as necessary before illumination, is the passive purification of the senses which we shall discuss farther on: it is, in fact, at the threshold of the illuminative way, like a second conversion.

CHAPTER XXXVI

How to Attain to the Life of Prayer and Persevere in It

WE HAVE defined prayer and explained how that of beginners tend to become increasingly simple in order that it may become the prayer of simplicity described by Bossuet. We shall now explain how a person can attain to the life of prayer thus conceived and persevere in it.

How to Attain to This Life

We must remember, first of all, that prayer depends especially on the grace of God; hence we prepare for it far less by processes, which might remain mechanical, than by humility, for "God . . . giveth grace to the humble," [1] and He makes us humble in order to load us with His gifts. To remind us of the necessity of humility and simplicity, or purity of intention, Christ said to his apostles: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," [2] especially into the intimacy of the kingdom, or into the life of prayer. God Himself is pleased to instruct immediately those who are truly humble of heart; such was the peasant of Ars who remained for a long time in silence near the tabernacle, in intimate and wordless conversation with our Lord. If we love to be nothing, to accept contempt, and not only accept it, but end by loving it, we shall make great progress in prayer; we shall be loaded with gifts far beyond all our desires.

Preparation for the life of prayer depends not only on humility, but also on mortification, which is the spirit and practice of detach-

[1] Jas. 4:6; I Pet. 5:5; Prov. 3:34.
[2] Matt. 18:3.

ment from sensible things and from self. Clearly, if our minds are preoccupied with worldly interests and affairs, and our souls agitated by too human an affection, by jealousy, by the memory of wrongs done us by our neighbor, or by rash judgments, we shall not be able to converse with our Lord. If in the course of the day we criticize our superiors or fail in docility toward them, when evening comes we shall hardly be likely to find the presence of God in prayer. Therefore all inordinate inclinations must be mortified so that charity may take the uncontested first place in our soul and rise spontaneously toward God in distress as well as in consolation.

To attain to the life of prayer, we must, in the course of the day, often lift our hearts to God, converse with Christ about everything, as with the guide who leads us in our ascent; and then when we stop for a moment to chat more intimately with our Guide, we shall have something to say to Him; above all, we shall know how to listen to His inspirations because we shall be on holy and intimate terms with Him. To reach this intimacy, young religious are often taught to "sanctify the hour" when it strikes, that is, to offer it to the Lord in order to be more united to Him during the following period of time. It is also advised, especially on certain feast days or on the first Friday of the month, to multiply from morning until evening acts of love of God and our neighbor, not in a mechanical manner, such as counting them, but as the occasion presents itself: for example, on meeting a person, whether that person be naturally congenial to us or not. If we are faithful to this practice, we shall find when evening comes that we are closely united to God.

Finally, we must create silence in our soul; we must quiet our more or less inordinate passions in order to hear the interior Master, who speaks in a low voice as a friend to his friend. If we are habitually preoccupied with ourselves, seek ourselves in our work, in study and exterior activity, how shall we delight in the sublime harmonies of the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity present in us, of the redemptive Incarnation, and of the Eucharist? The disorder and clamor of our sensibility must truly cease for the life of prayer. Therefore the Lord at times so profoundly cultivates the sensible appetites, especially in the passive night of the senses, that they may eventually become silent and submit with docility to the mind or to the superior part of the soul.

All this work of life may be called the remote preparation for

prayer. It is far more important than the immediate preparation, that is, than the choice of a subject; for this latter preparation has as its object only to excite the fire of charity, which ought never to be extinguished in us and which should be continually fed with a generosity sustained by fidelity to the duty of the present moment.

To further this remote preparation, we must advise what has been called prayer while working; in other words, choosing about a quarter of an hour in the middle of the morning or afternoon, in the very midst of our work, whether intellectual or external, with the intention, not of interrupting it, but of accomplishing it in a holier manner under the eye of God. This practice is most profitable. By it we reach the point of no longer seeking self in our work, of renouncing what is too natural and somewhat egotistical in our activity, so that we may sanctify it and preserve union with God by placing all our energies at His service, by freeing ourselves from complacency in personal satisfaction.

Thus generous and simple souls, in the wide sense of the term, will reach an uninterrupted conformity with the divine will and will practically always preserve the presence of God, which will render the immediate preparation for prayer less necessary. They will be already disposed, inclined to turn to God, as the stone turns toward the center of the earth as soon as a void is created beside it. They will thus reach a true life of prayer, which will be for them a kind of spiritual respiration.

How to Persevere in the Life of Prayer

With perseverance much can be gained; without it, everything can be lost. Perseverance is not easy: a struggle must be carried on against self, against spiritual sloth, against the devil, who inclines us to discouragement. Many souls, on being deprived of the first consolations which they received, turn back; among them are souls that had made considerable advance. We may cite the case of St. Catherine of Genoa, who from the age of thirteen was drawn by God to prayer and made great progress in it; after five years of suffering, she abandoned the interior life, and for the next five years led a completely exterior life. However, one day when, on the advice of her sister, she was going to confession, she experienced with anguish the profound void in her soul; the desire of God revived in her.

In an instant she was taken back by God in the strongest, most imperious manner and, after fourteen years of great penance, she received assurance that she had fully satisfied divine justice. "If I should turn back," she said then, "I should wish my eyes to be torn out, and even that would not seem sufficient." Such vigorous words of the saints express concretely what all theologians say abstractly: that it is better to lose one's sight than to lose grace, or even to retrogress on the way to eternity. For anyone who knows the value of life, the value of time in relation to eternity, this statement is incontestable. It is, therefore, most important to persevere and to press forward.

Some souls, after struggling for a long time, become discouraged when they are perhaps only a few steps from the fountain of living water. Then, without prayer, they no longer have the strength to carry the cross generously; they let themselves slip into an easy, superficial life, in which others might perhaps be saved, but in which they run the risk of being lost. Why is this? Because their vigorous faculties, which were made to seek God, will incline them, in their search for the absolute which they desire, to look for it where it is not. For certain strong souls, mediocrity is not possible; if they do not give themselves entirely to God on the road of sanctity, they will belong wholly to themselves. They will wish to spend their life enjoying their ego; they run the risk of turning away from God and of placing their last end in the satisfaction of their pride or of their concupiscences. In this respect, certain souls somewhat resemble the angels. The angel, says St. Thomas, is either very holy or very wicked; there is no middle course. The angel makes a choice either of ardent charity or of irrémissible mortal sin; venial sin is impossible for a pure spirit, since immediately seeing the end, its will is completely engaged. Either it becomes holy, forever established in supernatural good, or it turns away from God forever.3

Some souls absolutely need prayer, intimate and profound prayer; another form of prayer will not suffice for them. There are very intelligent people whose character is difficult, intellectuals who will dry up in their work, in study, in seeking themselves therein with pride, unless they lead a life of true prayer, which for them should be a life of mental prayer. It alone can give them a childlike soul in

• St, Thomas, la llac, q.89, a.4.

regard to God, to the Savior, and to the Blessed Virgin. It alone can teach them the profound meaning of Christ's words: "Unless . . . you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is, therefore, important, especially for certain souls, to persevere in prayer; unless they do so, they are almost certain to abandon the interior life and perhaps come to ruin.

To persevere in prayer two things are necessary: to have confidence in Christ, who calls all pious souls to the living waters of prayer, and humbly to allow ourselves to be led by the road He Himself has chosen for us. First of all, we must have confidence in Him. We fail in this regard when, after the first slightly prolonged periods of aridity, we decide that prayer is not for us, nor we for it. On this score, we might as well say, as the Jansenists did, that frequent Communion is not for us, but only for a few great saints. Our Lord calls all souls to this intercourse of friendship with Him. He compares Himself to the good shepherd, who leads his sheep to the eternal pastures, that they may feed on the word of God. In these pastures is the fountain of living water of which Christ spoke to the Samaritan woman, who was, nevertheless, a sinner: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee: Give Me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." [4] Likewise at Jerusalem on a festal day, "Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believeth in Ale, as the Scripture saith: Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now this He said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him." [5]

The fountain of water (forar *vivus)* is the Holy Ghost, who has been sent to us, who is given to us with infused charity which unites us to Him. Moreover, He has been given to us as interior Master and Comforter to make us penetrate and taste the inner meaning of the Gospel: "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [6] This was realized for the apostles on Pentecost, and for us, proportionately, on the day of our confirmation. Therefore St. John writes to the simple

'.John 4:10.
6 John 7=37-39-
• John 14:26.

faithful in his First Epistle: "You have the unction from the Holy One. . . . Let the unction, which you have received from Him, abide in you. . . . His unction teacheth you of all things" [7] useful to salvation.

St. Paul says also: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." [8] The Holy Ghost is thus in all the just, in every soul in the state of grace. He, who is subsistent Love itself, dwells in us, not to remain idle but to operate in us, to be our interior Master by His seven gifts, which are permanent, infused dispositions given to assure our docility to Him. These dispositions grow in us with charity. Therefore, if we do not better hear the holy inspirations of the interior Master, it is because we are listening too intently to ourselves and are not sufficiently desirous of the profound reign of God in us. To persevere in prayer, we must, therefore, have confidence in Christ and in the Holy Ghost whom He has sent to us.

Finally, we must allow ourselves to be led by the path which our Lord has chosen for us. There is, to be sure, the common and indispensable way, that of humility and conformity to the divine will; hence we must all pray as the publican did. But on this common road, one part is shaded, the other has nothing to protect it from the burning rays of the sun; one section is flat, followed by long, steep hills that lead to high plateaus where we may enjoy a marvelous view. The good Shepherd leads His sheep as Lie judges best. Some He guides by the parables, others by the way of reasoning; to others He gives, in the obscurity of faith, simple and penetrating intuition, great views of the whole, which are the distinctive characteristic of wisdom. He leaves certain souls for a rather long time in difficulties in order to inure them to the struggle. For several years St. Teresa herself had to make use of a book in order to meditate, and the time seemed very long to her. Our Lord raises the Marys rather than the Marthas to contemplation, but the former find therein intimate sufferings unknown to the latter; and if the latter are faithful, they will reach the living waters and will slake their thirst according to their desire.

We must, therefore, allow ourselves to be led by the road which the Lord has chosen for us. If aridity is prolonged, we should know

[7] Cf. I John r.io, 17.
[8] Rom. 5:j.

that it does not spring from lukewarmness, provided that we have no taste for the things of the world but rather concern for our spiritual progress. Aridity, on the contrary, is very useful, like fire that must dry out the wood before setting it ablaze. Aridity is needed precisely to dry up our too lively, too impetuous, exuberant, and tumultuous sensibility, so that finally the sensible appetites may be quieted and become submissive to the spirit; so that, above these passing emotions, there may grow in us the strong and pure love of charity, which has its seat in the elevated part of the soul.

Then if we are faithful, as St. Thomas teaches,[9] we shall gradually begin to contemplate God in the mirror of sensible things, or in that of the parables. Our soul will rise from one of these parables to the thought of infinite mercy, by a straight movement, like that of a lark soaring directly from earth toward heaven.

At other times we shall contemplate God in the mirror of the mysteries of salvation, aiding ourselves, for example, by recalling the mysteries of the Rosary. By a spiral (oblique) movement analogous to the flight of the swallow, we shall rise from the joyful to the sorrowful mysteries, and to those which announce the fife of heaven.

Finally, on certain days we shall contemplate God in Himself, holding fast in the obscurity of faith to the thought of His infinite goodness which communicates to us all the blessings we receive. By a circular movement similar to that of the eagle high in the air, we shall repeatedly come back to this thought of the divine goodness. And, whereas the egoist always thinks of himself and refers everything to himself, we shall begin to think always of God dwelling in us, and to refer everything to Him. Then, even when the most unforeseen and painful events occur, we shall think of the glory of God and of the manifestation of His goodness, and we shall glimpse from afar the supreme Good toward which everything, trials as well as joys, should converge. This is truly the life of prayer, which allows us to see all things in God; it is the normal prelude of eternal life.

[8] Cf. IIa IIae, q. i8o, a. 6.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Retarded Souls

AT THE beginning of the third part of this work, we shall speak of the second conversion through which one passes, with greater or lesser generosity, from the purgative way of beginners to the illuminative way of the advanced. Some souls, because of their negligence or spiritual sloth, do not pass from the age of beginners to that of proficients. These are retarded souls; in the spiritual life they are like abnormal children, who do not happily pass through the crisis of adolescence and who, though they do not remain children, never reach the full development of maturity. Thus these retarded souls belong neither among beginners nor among proficients. Unfortunately they are numerous.

Of these retarded souls, some who formerly served God with fidelity are now in a state bordering on indifference. Though in the past they knew true spiritual fervor, we may say without fear of rash judgment that they seriously misused divine graces. Had it not been for this misuse, as a matter of fact the Lord would have continued what He had begun in them, for He does not refuse His help to those who do what is in their power to obtain it.

How did these souls reach this state of tepidity? As a rule, two principal causes are indicated: the neglect of little things in the service of God and the refusal to make the sacrifices He asks.

The Neglect of Little Things

The neglect of little things seems slight in itself, but it may become grave in its results. Our daily merit is ordinarily constituted by little acts of virtue from morning to night. As drops of water gradually wear away a stone, as drops of rain render the dried-up earth fertile, so our good acts by their repetition engender a good

habit, an acquired virtue; they preserve it and increase it; and, if they proceed from a supernatural or infused virtue, they obtain the increase of this virtue.

In the service of God, things which seem small in themselves are great in their relation to our last end, to God who should be loved above all else. They are also great by reason of the supernatural spirit of faith, confidence, and love which should make us accomplish them. If we acted thus, we would live from morning to night in the presence of God, which is infinitely precious; and we would live by Him, by His spirit, instead of living by the natural spirit in accordance with the inclination of egoism. Little by little there would grow up in us zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Unless we strive in this way, we may end by following the downward path of practical naturalism, allowing ourselves to be dominated by the more or less unconscious gross selfishness which inspires many of our acts.

The neglect of little things in the service of God leads rapidly to neglect of great things: for example, in the case of a priest or religious, it leads to the recitation of the Office without true piety, to scarcely any preparation for Mass, to saying Mass hastily or assisting at it without the requisite attention, to replacing thanksgiving by the obligatory recitation of a part of the Office, so that all personal piety disappears and gradually gives place to piety that is, in a way, official and exterior. If a priest were to follow this downward path, he would little by little become a mere functionary of God. He vtfould end by treating holy things with carelessness, whereas, on the other hand, he would perhaps acquit himself with the utmost seriousness in those duties which assure his reputation as a professor, writer, lecturer, or man of affairs. Gradually emphasis would be shifted from what is of greatest moment in life to what is secondary. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which perpetuates in substance on our altars the sacrifice of the cross and applies its fruits to us, is evidently the most serious and greatest thing in life for the priest and the true Christian. A Mass well celebrated or well heard with a spirit of faith is far superior to our personal activity; it orientates this activity toward its true supernatural end and renders it fruitful. On the contrary, we swerve from this end when we reach the stage of seeking self in our activity, to the point of forgetting the salvation of souls and all that it demands on our part.

Neglect of little things in the service of God may lead us to this forgetfulness, which renders everything unfruitful.

We read, on the contrary, in St. Luke: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater." [1] Whoever is daily faithful to the smallest duties of Christian life, or to those of the religious life, will receive the grace to be faithful even to martyrdom, if he should have to bear witness to God in his blood. Then will be fully accomplished in him the words of the Gospel: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." [2] But whoever habitually neglects little things in the service of God, will end by neglecting great ones. How, then, will he accomplish the difficult acts that may be required of him?

The Refusal of Sacrifices Asked

A second cause of tepidity in retarded souls is the refusal to make the sacrifices which the Lord asks. Some persons feel themselves called to a more serious, a more perfect life, to true prayer, to the practice of humility, without which there are no true virtues; but these souls refuse, if not directly at least indirectly, by seeking diversion. They do not wish to hear the words that recur daily in the invitatory of Matins: "Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Some, who are preoccupied with doing something, for example, a book, a work that would let the world know they exist, say to themselves from time to time: "First of all, it is essential to become an interior soul; if the soul is empty, it can give nothing. To do something exterior is unprofitable unless the soul is united to God." To become an interior soul, only some sacrifices of self-love would be necessary; God would have to be truly sought instead of self. Without these sacrifices, how can anyone enter on a true interior life? If these sacrifices are refused, the soul remains retarded; it may stay so permanently.

Then it loses zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of its neighbor, the fervor of charity. It falls into tepidity, which, with habitual negligence, is affection for venial sin or the disposition of the will to commit certain venial sins deliberately when the occa-

[1] Luke i6: to.
[2] Matt. 15:23.

sion presents itself. There is finally, as it were, the firm resolution to remain in this state.

In addition to the lack of the spirit of sacrifice, other causes may produce this tepidity of retarded souls: namely, levity of spirit, the thoughtlessness with which one tells, for example, officious lies (i.e., lies of expediency) whenever the occasion offers; spiritual sloth, which leads finally to the abandonment of the spiritual war against our defects, against our predominant fault, which quite frequently tries to pass for a virtue, and gives rise in us to other more or less inordinate passions. A person thus arrives at carelessness and indifference in regard to perfection and no longer truly tends toward it. The fact that he has perhaps promised to tend toward it by the way of the counsels is forgotten, as is also the loftiness of the supreme precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." [8]

The Tendency to Derision

Among the causes of tepidity in retarded souls, the tendency to derision should be particularly noted. St. Thomas speaks of the derider when he discusses the vices opposed to justice: insult, detraction, murmuring against the reputation of our neighbor. He points out[4] that to deride or to ridicule someone, is to show that we do not esteem him; and derision, says the saint, may become a mortal sin if it affects persons or things that deserve high esteem. It is a grievous sin to ridicule the things of God, or our parents, or superiors, or good persons who lead a virtuous life. Derision may even become very grievous by reason of its consequences, for it may turn weak souls forever away from the practice of good. Job replied to his friends: "He that is mocked by his friends as I, shall call upon God; and He will hear him. For the simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn." [5] But it is also said of deriders: "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them." [8] The terrible irony of heaven will chastise that of earth.

The derider is himself a retarded soul, holding others back and

[8] Luke 10:27.
[4] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 75, a. 2.
"Job i2:4.
[8] Ps. 2:4.

becoming, often without being aware of it, the instrument of the spirit of evil. His cast of soul, which is the direct opposite of evangelical simplicity, is the one most opposed to supernatural contemplation. The derider, who wishes "to play the rogue," ridicules the just man who tends truly to perfection; he emphasizes the latter's defects and depreciates his good qualities. Why is this? Because he feels that he himself has little virtue, and he is unwilling to admit his inferiority. Then, out of spite, he lessens the real and fundamental value of his neighbor and the necessity of virtue itself. He may greatly harm weak souls which he intimidates, and, while working his own ruin, he may labor at their perdition.

The Unhappy Results of This State

The saints tell us that retarded and tepid souls may reach such a state of blindness of spirit and hardness of heart that it is very difficult to reform them. This statement is borne out by St. Bernard, who says: "You will more easily see a great number of seculars renounce vice and embrace virtue than a single religious pass from tepidity to fervor." [7] The higher a retarded or tepid soul has been raised, the more deplorable is its fall and also the more difficult is its conversion; in fact, it reaches the point where it judges its state to be satisfactory, and no longer has a desire to ascend higher. When the time of the Lord's visit is disregarded, He sometimes returns only after long petitions. Retarded souls are in danger; they should be intrusted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who alone can bring them back to the Savior and obtain for them the graces that will rekindle in them the desire for perfection.

On this subject Father Lallemant, S.J., wrote a striking chapter reminiscent of certain pages from the writings of St. Catherine of Siena and of Tauler. Lallemant's beautiful book, *The Spiritual Doctrine,* contains the following statement:

> In a community there may be four classes of religious: some perfect; others wicked, haughty, full of vanity, sensual, enemies of regularity; others tepid, cowardly, indifferent; and finally, the virtuous who tend to perfection, although they may perhaps never reach it.
>
> Religious belonging to these four classes may be found in the holiest religious orders, as well as in those communities which have fallen into a

[7] *Epist. ad Richard.*

relaxed condition; with this difference, however, that in an order which has fallen from its first fervor, the larger number belong to the tepid group, and the remainder is composed of a few wicked souls, of a small number who work at their perfection, and of a very limited number of perfect souls. But in an order in which regular observance is still in its vigor, the bulk of the community is composed of those who tend to perfection, and the remainder comprises a few perfect souls, a small number of tepid religious, and very few wicked souls.

We may make a very important observation here: that is, that a religious order leans toward decadence when the number of the tepid begins to equal that of the fervent. By the fervent, I mean those who strive from day to day to make fresh progress in prayer, recollection, mortification, purity of conscience, and humility. Those who do not make this effort should be considered tepid, although they may keep from mortal sin; they corrupt many others, do extreme harm to the whole body, and are themselves in danger, either of not persevering in their vocation, or of falling into interior pride or great darkness.

The duty of superiors in religious houses is to act in such a way, as well by their good example as their exhortations, their individual conferences, and their prayers, that their inferiors may remain in the ranks of the fervent who tend to perfection; otherwise, the superiors themselves will bear the punishment, and a terrible punishment it will be.§

All this is only too true and shows how easy it is to become a retarded soul, to stray from the road of perfection, by ceasing to live according to the spirit of faith. Then, evidently, it becomes difficult to admit that the contemplation of the mysteries of faith is in the normal way of sanctity; or one may conclude that this doctrine seems true in theory, but is little in accord with the facts. To tell the truth, we should say that, as a matter of fact, many souls remain retarded; they are not in order; they do not really tend toward perfection and certainly do not nourish themselves sufficiently with the mysteries of faith, with the mystery of the Mass, at which, however, they frequently assist, but in a manner that is not sufficiently interior to assure the progress that should be made.

Father Lallemant adds:

There are four things prejudicial to the spiritual life, and on them are based the evil maxims that slip into holy communities: (1) the esteem of purely human talents and qualities; (2) the care to make friends for solely

§ *The Spiritual Doctrine,* Appendix, chap. 8.

human reasons; (3) a politic conduct directed only by human prudence, a spirit that is sly and opposed to evangelical simplicity; (4) superfluous recreations which the soul seeks or conversations and reading which give a wholly natural satisfaction to the mind.[9]

These four enemies of the spiritual life give rise, as Father Lallemant points out in this same chapter, to ambition, the desire for eminent positions or the wish to make a reputation for oneself in the sciences, and the seeking after one's ease; all of which are manifestly opposed to spiritual progress.

In this discussion of retarded souls, a most important consideration should be noted: namely, that we must be on the alert to preserve in our souls the subordination of the natural activity of the mind to the essentially supernatural virtues, especially to the three theological virtues. These three infused virtues and their acts are certainly very superior to the natural activity of the mind necessary for the study of the sciences, of philosophy, and of theology. To deny this truth would be a heresy; but it is not sufficient to admit it in theory. Otherwise we would end by really preferring the study of philosophy and theology to the superior life of faith, to prayer, to the love of God and of souls, to the celebration of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which would be hurriedly celebrated without any spirit of faith, in order to give more time to a piece of work, to an intellectual overloading that would remain quite empty and fruitless, because it would be destitute of the spirit that ought to animate it. Thus we would fall into an evil intellectualism, in which there would be something like the hypertrophy of the reasoning powers to the detriment of the life of faith, of true piety, and of the indispensable training of the will. Then charity, the highest of the theological virtues, would no longer truly hold the first place in the soul, which might remain forever retarded and in part fruitless.

To remedy this retardation, we should often recall that God in His mercy continually offers us the grace to make us daily fulfill a little better the supreme precept, that is, the duty to tend toward the perfection of charity: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself." [10] Let us re-

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Luke 10:27.

member that in the evening of life we shall be judged on the sincerity of our love of God.

The Inclination to Egoism that Remains in Us

Tauler in his sermons often speaks of two inclinations in us, the one good, the other evil. His disciples gathered up his preaching on this subject in the third chapter of *Tide Institutions.* At this point in our study, we must emphasize the essential elements of this teaching, by noting the indications of the inclination that seeks self, and by showing how to bring about the predominance of the other fundamental inclination by means of which we are in the image of God.

Since all our works draw their value from the intention and love which produce them, and since all should spring from the love of God, we ought often to recall the fact that all sins and eternal damnation come from an evil inclination which seeks self and is opposed to God.

Christ Himself declares: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." This is equivalent to saying that without the death of the evil inclination in us our soul will never become rich in merits, in fruits of life for eternity. If, on the contrary, the evil inclination dies, then the seed of eternal life will grow in us. The knowledge of this evil inclination is, therefore, more useful to man than knowledge of the entire universe.

By what traits can this evil inclination be recognized? Simply by the fact that it continually seeks self rather than God in everything. If at times it gives evidence of love for God and neighbor, such a manifestation is only a deception and an illusion. This inclination fancies that it possesses justice and goodness; it often glories in its works, but chiefly in such as have some appearance of virtue and holiness. It takes delight in them, attributes them to itself, and, although it does not love true virtues, it seeks the praise that is due them.

This evil inclination considers its sins as trifles. Such an attitude is a proof that it is destitute of true light and does not know what sin is; for, if it had a true and clear understanding of what it is to turn

away from God, the sovereign Good, it would doubtless not willingly consent to do so.

This same inclination makes an effort always to appear good, although it is not. For this reason, some people would not dare to grieve anyone by a reproof because they could not endure a cross reply. This inclination at times even imagines that it loves God fervently, and consequently it reprehends its neighbor for his sins with extreme asperity. "But," says Tauler, "if it could see its own sins, it would completely forget those of others, no matter how great they might be." [11]

Every time this inclination is reproved, it strives to justify and defend itself, and cannot bear to be corrected. It tells itself that others have their defects, but that it has always acted with a good intention or through ignorance or weakness. This inclination reaches the point of persuading itself that it seeks God in everything, whereas in reality it seeks itself always and lives only on appearances and externals. It prefers appearance to reality. Therefore it seeks itself even in prayer and the taste for spiritual things, in interior consolations turning the gifts of heaven, whether interior or exterior, and even God Himself, to its own satisfaction. If it happens to lose an object of its delight, it immediately seeks another, in order to rest in it and to refer all to self.

How to Bring About the Predominance of the Other Inclination, Which Is in the Image of God

To bring about the predominance of the good inclination, man must be a severe guardian and observer of self, of his exterior and interior senses. He must not allow his senses to become dissipated, to run after creatures. "He must," says Tauler, "build a cell within his heart, withdraw to it and live in it as far as possible unknown to the whole world, that he may be less turned away from divine contemplation. He must not lose sight of the life and passion of our Savior." [12] The consideration of Christ's life and passion will give birth in him to the desire to resemble Christ by humility of heart, patience, meekness, true love of God and neighbor.

When a man finds that he is not conformed to the divine model,

[11] *The Institutioni,* chap. 3.
[12] *Ibid.*

he will ask the Holy Ghost to give him the grace better to see the ugliness of sin and its deadly results. He will abase himself with sincerity and humility, but with confidence in infinite mercy, begging it to raise him up again.

The more a man promptly mortifies his evil inclination, the more living and beautiful the image of God that is in him becomes: the natural image, that is, the soul itself in so far as by nature it is spiritual and immortal, and the supernatural image, in other words, sanctifying grace from which spring the infused virtues and the gifts. Then gradually man begins to think frequently of God instead of thinking always of himself, and instead of seeking self by referring everything to self, he begins to seek God in everything that happens, to love Him truly, effectively, practically, and to refer all to Him.

Tauler concludes: "As long as you seek yourself, as you act for yourself, as you ask for the reward of and the wages for your actions, and cannot endure being known by others for what you really are, you dwell in illusion and error worthy of pity. When you despise another because of his defects, and when you wish to be preferred to those who do not live according to your maxims, you do not know yourself, you are still ignorant of the evil inclination that subsists in you." [18] It is this inclination that hinders the image of God from being what it ought to be, so that the soul may truly bear the fruits of eternal life; therefore the necessity of knowing oneself profoundly in order to know God and to love Him truly.

These reflections on retarded souls lead us to speak of the necessity of the second conversion or passive purification of the senses, which marks, according to St. John of the Cross, the entrance into the illuminative way of the advanced. We will discuss this subject in the second volume of this work.

[18] *Ibid.*

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St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-95). *Life of Moses,* in which he treats of the ascent of the soul toward perfection.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (330-90). *Sermons,* notably XXXIX, chaps. 8-10.

St. John Chrysostom (344-407). *Homilies; On the Priesthood.*

St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). *Thesaurus; Homilies; Commentary on the Gospel of St. John,* particularly Bk. IV on the Eucharist, and Bk. V on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in souls.

Pseudo-Dionysius *(sir.* 500). *The Divine Names; Mystical Theology; The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; Letters.*

St. John Climachus (d. 649). *Scala paradisi,* a summary of asceticism and mysticism for the monks of the Orient.

Diadochus (bishop of Photike). *De perfectione.*

St. Maximus Confessor (580-662). *Scolia* on Dionysius and his *Liber asceticus.* He explains the doctrine of Dionysius on contemplation.

St. John Damascene (675-749). *Lie virtutibus et vitiis; Sacra parallela; De Nativitate Domini.*

St. Ephrem (fourth century), in Syriac literature, wrote works that are essentially mystical by their lofty inspiration. Cf. J. Lamy, S. *Ephraem syri Hymni et sermones,* 4 vols., 1882-1902.

Latin Patrology

St. Cyprian (200-58). *De habitu virginum; De dominica oratione; De bono patientiae; De zelo et livore.*

St. Ambrose (337-97). *De officiis ministrorum; De virginibus; De virginitate; De viduis; De Isaac et anima,* chaps. 3, 8; *In Ps.* 118, *sermo 6.*

St. Augustine (354-430). *Confessiones,* IX, 10; X, 40; *Soliloquia; De doctrina Christiana; De civitate Dei; Epist.* 211; *De quantitate animae,* chap. 33; *De Sermone Domini in monte,* Bk. I, chaps. 3 and 4; *Enarr. in ps.,* 33:5.

Cassian (360-435). *Collationes;* cf. especially Conferences *qf.*

St. Leo the Great (d. 461). *Sermones.*

St. Benedict (480-543). *Regula,* critical edition by Butler, 1912; a rule which is full of discretion and which became that of almost all the monks of the West up to the thirteenth century.

St. Gregory the Great (540-604). *Expositio in librum Job, sive Moralium libri* XXXV; *Liber regulae pastoralis; Homiliae in Ezechielem,* especially Bk. II, horn. 2, 3, 5.

St. Bede the Venerable (673-735). *Lucam.*

St. Peter Damian (1007-72). *On the Perfection of Monks,* chaps. 8 and 10.

The Middle Ages

Benedictine and Cistercian Spirituality; Contemplative and Liturgical Spirituality

St. Anselm (1033-1109). *Meditationes; Orationes; Cur Deus homo.*

St. Bernard (1090-1153). *Sermones de tempore; de sanctis; de diversis; In Canticum Canticorum; De consideratione; De gradibus humilitatis; De conversione,* chaps. 12-14; *De diligendo Deo.* Cf. E. Gilson, *La théologie mystique de saint Bernard,* 1934.

St. Hildegard (d. 1179). *Liber divinorum operum.*

St. Gertrude (1256-1301) and St. Mechtilde (d. *cir.* 1285). *Revelations,* which show a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

St. Bridget (1302-73). *Revelations,* particularly those on the passion of our Lord.

Jean de Castel. *De adhaerendo Deo,* for a long time attributed to Albert the Great; *De lumine increato,* 1410.

Garcia de Cisneros (d. 1510). *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual,* a work which, in a sense, prepares for the *Exercises of* St. Ignatius.

Dom C. Butler. *Benedictine Monachism.* New York: Longmans, 1924.

To the above should be added:

St. Lawrence Justinian (1380-1455), reformer of the Canons Regular in Italy. *De humilitate; De perfectionis gradibus; De incendio divini amoris; De vita solitaria.*

The School of St. Victor

Hugh (d. 1141). *Homilia I in Eccl.; De anima,* Bk. III, chap. 49; *De sacramentis Christianae fidei; De vanitate mundi; Soliloquium de arrha animae; De laude caritatis; De modo orandi; De amore sponsi ad sponsam; De meditando.*

Richard (d. 1173). *Benjamin minor, seu de praeparatione ad contemplationem; Benjamin major, seu de gratia contemplationis; Expositio in Cantica Canticorum; De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis.*

Adam (d. 1177). *Sequentiae.*

Carthusian Spirituality; Contemplative Spirituality and That of the Eremitical Life

Dom Guignes II. *Scala claustralium (lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio};* cf. especially chap. 10.

Hugh of Balma (d. 1439). *Theologia mystica.*

Ludolph the Carthusian (1300-70). *Vie de Notre-Seigneur par manière de méditation,* a book which was very much read in the Middle Ages.

Dionysius the Carthusian (1402-71). *De conversione peccatoris; Speculum conversionis; De fonte lucis; De contemplatione; Tractatus de donis Spiritus Sancti; De discretione spirituum; Commentar. in*

Dionysium (ed. of the Carthusians of Montreuil-sur-Mer, begun in 1896).

John Lanspergius (d. 1539). *Alloquia Christi ad animam fidelem; Opuscula spiritualia.* These works show his great devotion to the Sacred Heart.

L. Surius (1522-78). *De probatis sanctorum historiis.* He translated Tauler's sermons into Latin.

Molina the Carthusian (1560-1612). *Instrucciôn de sacerdotes; Ejereidos espirituales.*

Dominican Spirituality

On a strong doctrinal basis, it unites liturgical prayer and contemplation with apostolic action, as one sees exemplified in the life of St. Dominic.

Hugh of Saint-Cher (d. 1263). *De vita spirituali; Ex commentariis Hugonis de Sancto Charo O.P. super totam bibliam excerpta,* under the direction of Father Dionysius Mésard, O.P. (Pustet, 1910). An excellent work, divided by Father Mésard into four parts: *De vita purgativa, de vita illuminativa, de vita unitiva, de vita spirituali sacerdotum.*

Blessed Humbert of Romans (d. 1277), Fifth Master General of the Friars Preachers. *Expositio stiper Regulam S. Augustini et Constitutiones Fr. Praedicatorum* (ed. Berthier, Rome, 1889).

St. Albert the Great (1206-80). *Commentarii in Joannem, in Dionysium; Mariale; De sacrificio Missae.*

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). *Commentarii in Psalmos; in lib. Job; in Canticum canticorum; in Matth.; in Joann.; in Epist. S. Pauli; Summa theologica,* in which he treats at length of the virtues in general and of each one in particular, of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of graces *gratis datae,* of rapture, of the influence of the good and bad angels; in particular the tract on charity sets forth the principles of the most solid spirituality. Cf. also his opuscula: *De perfectione spirituali; Expositio in Symbol. Apost; et in Orat. dominie.; Officium SS. Sacramenti.* The saint's completely objective doctrine reaches beyond the particular spirituality of a religious order; here again St. Thomas merits the title of *Doctor communis* in the Church.

St. Vincent Ferrer (1346-1419). *Treatise on the Spiritual Life* (English translation by D. A. Dixon. Westminster, Maryland: Newman Bookshop, 1944).

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80). *The Dialogue* (English translation by Algar Thorold. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1925). Complete works in Italian published by Girolamo Gigli, Siena, 1707 (ed. Tommaseo, Florence, i860).

Tauler (d. 1361). *Sermons* (critical German edition of Vetter, 1910). The *Institutions* were not written by Tauler, but are extracts from his sermons and contain a summary of his teaching.

Blessed Henry Suso (d. 1365). *Die Schriften des Heiligen H. Suso.* Published by Father Denifle, O.P.

Franciscan Spirituality

It leads the soul to live especially by the love of Jesus crucified, through the practice of abnegation and in particular of evangelical poverty.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). *Opuscula* (critical ed., Quaracchi, 1904).

St. Bonaventure (1221-74). He treated at length of the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in his *Commentaries on Ecclesiastes, the Book of Wisdom,* the *Gospels of St. John and St. Luke,* in those on the four books of *The Sentences,* and in the works which are, strictly speaking, spiritual: *De triplice via, Itinerarium mentis ad Deum, Breviloquium* (Quaracchi, Vols. V, VIII). Cf. *Diet, de spirit.,* art. "S. Bonaventure," by E. Longpré, O.F.M.

Blessed Angela of Foligno (d. 1309). *Book of Visions and Instructions.*

St. Catherine of Bologna (1413-63). *Treatise on the Seven Spiritual Weapons.*

The Flemish School of Mysticism

Blessed John Ruysbroeck (1293-1381). *Œuvres,* translated from the Flemish by the Benedictines of the Abbey of Saint-Paul de Wisques: *The Mirror of a Mystic; De septem gradibus amoris; The Spiritual Espousals.*

Gerhard Groote (d. 1384). He wrote several puscula on spirituality.

Gerlac Peterssen (1378-1411). *Soliloquium ignitum.*

Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471). Probable author of *The Imitation of Christ.*[1] He composed various opuscula of great piety; *Soliloquium animae; Vallis liliorum; Cantica; De elevatione mentis* (ed. Pohl, Fribourg, 1902-22).

John Mauburnus (Mombaer). *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium* (1491), a great compilation in which methods of meditation are discussed.

Toward the close of the Middle Ages, the following also should be noted:

Gerson (1363-1429). In spite of absolutely subversive nominalist theses *(nullus est actus intrinsece malus ex objecto),* he wrote some good spiritual works: *La prière; La communion; La montagne "de la contemplation; La théologie mystique spéculative et pratique; La perfection du cœur; Considérations sur saint Joseph.*

W. Hilton (d. 1396). *The Scale of Perfection.* Ed. by Evelyn Underhill. London: J. M. Watkins, 1923.

Juliana of Norwich (d. 1442). *Revelations of Divine Love.*

[1] Cf. Dorn Huybcn, *La vie spirituelle,* luppl., 1923-16.

St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510). *Dialogues; Treatise on Purgatory*.

Anonymous English Mystic (14th cent.). *The Cloud of Unknowing*, with a commentary by Dom Augustine Baker, O.S.B. (ed. by Dom Justin McCann. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1924).

The Modern Period

In the modern period, spirituality often takes a more active form and tends to radiate more beyond the cloister, into the world; new schools appear, while the older schools continue to show the value of the traditional teaching.

Benedictine and Cistercian Spirituality

Louis Blosius (1506-66). *Institutio spiritualis*, an excellent treatise, which contains the substance of his other works: *Œuvres spirituelles* (translation by the Benedictines of Saint-Paul de Wisques). Blosius wrote a defense of Tauler, whom he explains in a way that makes his teaching more accessible.

Dom Augustine Baker (1575-1641). *Sancta Sophia (Holy Wisdom)*, a treatise on contemplation. New York: Benziger, 1890.

Cardinal Bona (1609-74). *Manuductio ad coelum; Principia et documenta vitae christianae; De sacrificio missae; De discretione spirituum; Opuscula ascetica selecta.* Herder, 1911.

Schram (1658-1720). *Institutiones theologiae mysticae.* New edition, 1868.

Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-75). *The Liturgical Year* (translation by Dom Laurence Shepherd. London: Burns, Oates, 1890-1904).

Dom Delatte (of Solesmes). *Commentaire de la Règle de saint Benoit.*

Dom Vital Lehodey (abbot of the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame-de-Grace. *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (translation by a monk of Mount Melleray. Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1930); *Le saint abandon.* 1919.

Dom Columba Marmion (abbot of Maredsous). *Christ, the Life of the Soul* (1923); *Christ in His Mysteries* (1924); *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* (1926). St. Louis: Herder.

Dom E. Vandeur (of Maredsous). Various spiritual works on the Mass.

Dom Anselm Stolz. *Théologie der Mystik.* Regensburg, 1936. English translation, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection.* St. Louis: Herder, 1938.

Dominican Spirittiality

St. Catherine de Ricci (1522-90). *Lettere* (ed. Guasti, Florence, 1890).

Luis de Granada (1504-88). *Guia de pecadores; Tratado de la oracion y meditacion; Memorial de la vida cristiana.*

Blessed Bartholomew a Martyribus (archbishop of Braganza). *Compendium doctrinae spiritualis.* 1582.

John of St. Thomas (1589-1644). *De donis Spiritus Sancti.*

Thomas de Vallgornera (d. 1665). *Theologia mystica S. Thomae.* He draws considerably on the work of the Carmelite, Philip of the Blessed Trinity, which appeared shortly before his work.

V. Contenson (1641-74). *Theologia mentis et cordis.*

Louis Chardon (1595-1651). *La croix de Jésus* (new edition, 1937); *Les méditations sur la passion.*

A. Massoulié (1632-1706). *Traité de l'amour de Dieu; Traité de la véritable oraison* (ed. Rousset, 1900); *Méditations sur les trois voies* (ed. Florand, 1934). In these works, Massoulié, while refuting the errors of the quietists, sets forth the doctrine of St. Thomas.

A. Piny (1640-1709). *Le plus parfait (l'abandon)·, L'oraison du cœur; La clef du pur amour; La présence de Dieu; L'état du pur amour.* Recent editions, Paris: Lethielleux, Téqui.

A. M. Meynard. *Traité de la vie intérieure,* 1884. Re-edited and adapted by Father Gerest, 1923. Paris: Lethielleux.

B. Froget. *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Souls of the Just.* New York: The Paulist Press, 1921.

H. M. Cormier. *Instruction des novices* (1905); *Retraite ecclésiastique d'après l'Evangile et la vie des saints* (Rome, 1903); *Trois retraites progressives.*

M. A. Janvier. *Exposition de la morale catholique,* Vols. IV, V; *La charité.*

J. G. Arintero. *La evoluciôn mîstica* (Salamanca, 1908); *Questiones mîsticas* (2d ed., Salamanca, 1920); *Cantar de los cantares* (1919). In 1921 Father Arintero, of sainted memory, founded in Spain the spiritual magazine, *La vida sobrenatural.*

V. Bemadot. *De l'Eucharistie à la Trinité* (1918). In 1919 the author founded in France *La vie spirituelle. Notre-Dame dans ma vie* (>937)·

A. Gardeil. *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (1927); *La viaie vie chrétienne* (1935).

G. Gerest. *Mémento de vie spirituelle* (1923).

F. D. Joret. *La contemplation mystique d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin* (1923); *Recueillements* (1934).

R. Garrigou-Lagrange. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (1923. English translation by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P. St. Louis: Herder, 1937); *L'amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus* (1929); *Les trois conversions* (1932); *L'tmione mistica in S. Caterina da Siena* (Fiesolc, 1938); *Providence* (1932. English translation by Dom Bede Rose. St. Louis: Herder, 1944).

H. Petitot. *Introduction à la sainteté.* 1935.

V. Osende. *El tesoro escondido.* 1924.

H. D. Noble. *L'amitié avec Dieu.* 1932.

I. Mcnéndez-Rcigada. *De direcciôn espiritt/al.* 1934.

R. Bernard. *Le mystère de Marie.* 1933.
A. Lemonnyer. *Notre vie divine.* 1936.

Franciscan Spirituality

Francis de Osuna. *Abecedario espiritual* (1528), which St. Teresa used as a guide.
St. Peter of Alcantara (d. 1562), who was one of St. Teresa's directors. *La oration y meditation.*
John of the Angels. *Obras misticas* (1590). New ed., 1912-17.
Mary of Agreda. *The City of God* (1670). (English translation by Fiscar Marison. Hammond, Indiana: W. B. Conkey Co., 1915.)
Louis-Fr. d'Argentan (d. 1680). *Conférence sur les grandeurs de Dieu; Exercices du chrétien intérieur.*
Brancati de Lauria. *De oratione Christiana* (1687), often quoted by Benedict XIV.
Ambrose de Lombez. *Traité de la paix intérieure. 1757.*
Ludovic de Besse. *La science de la prière* (Rome, 1903); *La science du Pater* (1904).
Adolph a Denderwindeke, O.M.C. *Compendium theologiae asceticae.* 1921.
J. Heerinckx. *Introductio in theologiam spiritualem.* Rome, 1931.

Jestât Spiritual Writers

Theirs is a practical spirituality directed toward the sanctification of souls in the active and apostolic life.

St. Ignatius (d. 1556). *The Spiritual Exercises.* Cf. also his *Constitutions* and *Letters.*
St. Francis Xavier. *Letters.*
Alvarez de Paz (1560-1620). *De vita spirituali ejusque perfectione.* Lyons, 1602-12.
Suarez (1548-1617). *De religione.*
St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621). *De ascensione mentis in Deum; De genitu columbae sive de bono lacrymarum; De septem verbis a Christo in cruce prolatis; De arte bene moriendi.*
A. Le Gaudier (d. 1622). *De natura et statibus perfectionis.* 1643; re-edited, Turin, 1903.
Alphonsus Rodriguez (d. 1616). *Practice of Christian Perfection,* 3 vols. Chicago, 1929.
St. Alphonsus Rodriguez (d. 1617), Jesuit brother, raised to lofty contemplation. *Obras espirituales.* Barcelona, 3 vols., 1885.
Luis de Lapuente (Dupont) (d. 1624). *Spiritual Directory; The Christian Life; Meditations on the Mysteries of Our Holy Faith.*
Michael Godinez (Wadding) (1591-1644). *Practice de la teologia mtstica.* New ed., Lethielleux, 1920.

J. Nouet (d. 1680). *L'homme d'oraison* (1674), an excellent work.

Ven. Claude de la Colombière (d. 1682). *Grande retraite.* New ed., Desclée, 1897.

F. Guilloré (1615-84). *Les secrets de la vie spirituelle.* New Ed., 1922.

J. Galliffet. *De l'excellence de la dévotion au Cœur adorable de Jésus-Christ.* 1733.

L. Lallemant (d. 1635). *La doctrine spirituelle* (ed. Pottier, 1936), a remarkable work which shows how the soul, by purity of heart and docility to the Holy Ghost, ordinarily receives the grace of contemplation.

J. Surin (d. 1665). *Les fondements de la vie spirituelle; La guide spirituelle; Questions sur l'amour de Dieu* (ed. Pottier, 1930).

V. Huby (d. 1693). *Ecrits spirituels.* Ed. Bainvel, 1931.

P. de Caussade (d. 1751). *Abandonment to Divine Providence* (English translation by E. J. Strickland. St. Louis: Herder, 1921), an admirable book; *Progress in Prayer* (adapted and edited by J. McSorley, C.S.P. St. Louis: Herder, 1904).

Scaramelli (1687-1752). *Direttorio ascetico; Direttorio mistico.* He tends to show that asceticism is not essentially ordained to mysticism, and that acquired prayer does not normally dispose the soul to receive infused contemplation.

J. N. Grou (1731-1603). *Maximes spirituelles; Méditations en forme de retraite sur l'amotir de Dieu; Manuel des âmes intérieures.* Father Grou's doctrine reproduces and develops that of Father Lallemant.

J. B. Terrien *La grâce et la gloire* (1901); *La mère de Dieu et la mère des hommes* (1900).

R. de Maumigny. *Pratique de l'oraison mentale.* 8th ed., 1911.

A. Poulain. *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (English translation by Leonora Yorke-Smith. St. Louis: Herder, 1911), a treatise on mysticism written from the point of view of the descriptive method.

A. Eymieu. *Le gouvernement de soi-même.* 1911-21.

J. V. Bainvel. *La dévotion au Sacré-Cœur de Jésus* (4th ed., 1917); *Le saint cœur de Marie, vie intime de la Sainte Vierge* (1918).

Raoul Plus. *In Christ Jesus* (English translation by Peter Addison. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1926); *God within Us* (ed. by Cowell. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1929); *Progress in Divine Union* (English translation by Sister Mary Bertille and Sister Mary St. Thomas. New York: Pustet, 1941).

P. Charles. *La prière de toutes les heures.*

P. L. Peeters. *Vers l'union divine par les exercices de saint Ignace.* 2d. ed., 1931.

J. de Guibert. *Etudes de théologie mystique* (1930); *Theologia spiritualis ascetica et mystica* (1937). Since 1920 the *Revue d'ascétique*

et de mystique has appeared under his direction; since 1932 *Le dictionnaire de spiritualité* has appeared under the direction of Father M. Viller, S.J.

J. Maréchal. *Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques.* Brussels-Paris: I, 1924; II, 1937.

Paul de Jaegher. *An Anthology of Mysticism* (English translation by Donald Attwater and others. London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1935).

J. de Ghellinck. *Lectures spirituelles d'après les écrits des Pères.* Desclée de Brouwer, 1931.

R. de Sinety. *Psychopathologie et direction.* Paris: Beauchesne, 1934.

Carmelite Spirituality

Its center is the life of prayer, union with God through complete detachment, with the hidden apostolate by means of prayer.

St. Teresa (1515-82). *Obras de Santa Teresa, editadas y anotadas por el P. Silverio de S. Teresa.* 6 vols., Burgos, 1915-20. See especially the excellent English editions, published by the Benedictines of Stanbrook Abbey, of *The Interior Castle* (London: Thomas Baker, 1921) and *The Way of Perfection (ibid.).*

St. John of the Cross (1543-91). *Obras de San Juan de la Cruz ed. del P. Silverio de S. Teresa.* 5 vols., 1929-31. *Works of Saint John of the Cross* (English translation by David Lewis. New York: Benziger, 1909).

John of Jesus-Mary (1564-1615). *Theologia mystica* (re-edited in 1911, Herder); *Instructio novitiorum* (1883); *De virorum ecclesiasticorum perfectione.*

Thomas of Jesus (1568-1627). *De contemplatione divina.* Cologne, 1684.

Nicholas of Jesus-Mary. *Phrasium mysticae theologiae ven. P. Joannis a Cruce elucidatio.*

Philip of the Blessed Trinity (d. 1671). *Summa theologiae mysticae* (3 vols., new ed., Brussels, 1874). Thomas de Vallgornera, O.P., reproduces almost integrally the doctrine of this work in his *Theologia mystica S. Thomae.*

Anthony of the Holy.Ghost. *Directorium mysticum (Ἄπη),* a summary of the work of Philip of the Blessed Trinity.

Joseph of the Holy Ghost. *Cursus theologiae mystico-scholasticae.* Seville, 1710-40; new ed., Bruges: Beyaert, 1924-.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus (1873-97). *Lettres; Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus;* a new and complete translation of *L'histoire d'une âme* (New York: Kenedy, 1924).

Theodore of St. Joseph. *Essai sur l'oraison selon l'école carmélitaine.* Bruges, 1923.

Bruno of Jesus-Mary. St. *Jolm of the Cross* (New York: Benziger, *932); Lie *d'amour de saint Jean de la Croix* (Paris: Desclée de

Brouwer, 1934); *Madame Acarie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936).

Gabriel of St. Magdalen. *La Mistica Teresiana* (Fiesole, 1934); S. *Giovanni della Croce* (Florence, 1936); *Santa Teresa di Gestl, Maestra di vita spirituale* (Milan, 1935); *Diet, de spiritualité,* art. "Carmes: Ecole mystique thérésienne."

Since 1911 *Les études carmélitaines* has been publishing interesting works on mystical theology and religious psychology in order to make the teaching of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross better understood. See especially the articles by Father Louis of the Trinity, Father Bruno, and Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen. See also those of Jacques Maritain on St. John of the Cross. These articles have been reproduced in his beautiful book, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (English translation by B. Wall and M. Adamson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

Carmelites of the Old Observance

John of St. Samson (d. 1636), a lay brother who was raised to lofty contemplation. *Œuvres spirituelles* (2 vols., 1658); cf. *La vie spirituelle,* 1925-26.

St. Magdalen de Pazzi (1566-1607). *Estasi e lettere scelte.* Critical ed., Florence, 1924.

Salesian School

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). *Œuvres* published by the Visitation of Annecy, 1892. St. Francis de Sales shows that union wtih God is accessible in all states of life. The *Introduction to a Devout Life* (1608) describes the purgative way and the beginning of the illuminative. The *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616) deals particularly with the unitive way. His *Spiritual Conferences,* written for the Visitandines, are valuable to all religious souls. *Letters.*

St. Jane de Chantal. *Sa vie et ses œuvres.* Paris: Plon, 1877-93.

Mère de Chaugy. *Mémoires sur la vie et les vertus de sainte Jeanne de Chantel.* Paris: Plon, 1893.

St. Mary Mary. *Œuvres,* published by Msgr. Gauthey, Poussielgue.

P. Tissot. *L'art d'utiliser ses fautes, d'après S. François de Sales* (3d ed., 1918); *La vie intérieure simplifiée* (a work written by a Carthusian).

French School of the Seventeenth Century.

The spirituality of this school, founded by Cardinal Bérulle, springs from the dogma of the Incarnation and of our incorporation in Christ, with whom, by abnegation and the virtues, we glorify God living in us.

Cardinal Bérulle (1576-1629), founder of the Oratory in France. *Œuvres complètes* (cd. 1657; cd. 1856); his principal work is the *Discours de l'état et des grandeurs de Jésus.*

Charles de Condren (1588-16.41). *Œuvres complètes* (ist ed., 1668; 2d ed., 1857). See especially *L'idée du sacerdoce et du sacrifice,* on the priesthood of Christ and His holy humiliation of self.

F. Bourgoin (1585-1662). *Vérités et excellences de Jésus-Christ.* j2d ed., 1892.

St. Vincent de Paul (1576-1660). *Correspondance; Entretiens; Documents* (edited, published, and annotated by Father Coste, 1920). Cf. Maynard, *Vertus et doctrine spirituelle de saint Vincent de Paul.* Paris, 1882.

J. J. Olier (1608-57), founder of the Society of St. Sulpice. *Le catéchisme chrétien pour la vie intérieure,* in which he shows how, by the practice of mortification and humility, one attains to intimate union with Jesus; *L'introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes; La journée chrétienne; Le traité des saints ordres,* on union with our Lord, Priest and Victim.

L. Tronson (1622-1700). *Forma cleri; Examens particuliers.*

I. A. Emery (1732-1811). *L'esprit de sainte Thérèse.* 1775.

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Some Terms Used in This Book

(Added by the Publisher to the 1989 printing.)

Sensible, Sensitive—of the senses. These terms are used in reference either to the senses proper (external or internal, including the imagination) or to those movements of the appetites known as passions or emotions.

JUSTICE—1. the state of (Sanctifying) Grace. 2. the moral virtue by which one gives what is due to God, oneself and one's neighbor. (It is in the first sense that the term is usually used in the theology of the spiritual life.)

Justification, Sanctification—entering the state of grace. Sanctification also refers to the *increase of* Sanctifying Grace in the soul.

SUPERNATURAL—divine; pertaining to God or to Sanctifying Grace, which is divine life in the soul. Sanctifying Grace is described as "living water" in the Scriptures. By Sanctifying Grace the three Divine Persons dwell in the soul. The following accompany Sanctifying Grace and are likewise supernatural: the three Theological Virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity; the four infused moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude (these four virtues can also exist on the *natural* level); the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. All these supernatural gifts except Faith and Hope are lost by mortal sin; they are all regained through sacramental absolution.

THE Just—a person in the state of Sanctifying Grace.

The Sinner—a person in the state of mortal sin.

Charity—1) the supernatural virtue by which one loves God for His own sake and one's neighbor as oneself for the love of God; this virtue is infused into the soul in Baptism and also in absolution after sacramental confession of mortal sin. Charity is the highest virtue; it vivifies, "informs," or "forms the soul of" every other supernatural virtue. 2) acts of love of God or neighbor as defined above. A person in the state of mortal sin cannot exercise the virtue of Charity because he has lost Charity along with Sanctifying Grace. He can only perform acts of natural love of God and neighbor; these are not meritorious for salvation and heavenly reward, though God in His mercy may look upon them as a plea for the gifts of true repentance and return to Sanctifying Grace.

FAITH—the supernatural virtue by which one believes, on the word of God, all the truths He has revealed. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace. A person in the state of grace has *living* faith, because his faith is "informed" by Charity; a person in the state of mortal sin may still have faith, but it will be only *dead* faith.

Hope—the supernatural virtue by which one trusts in God's promises to give him eternal life and the means to obtain it. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace.

SANCTITY—the possessing of a high degree of Sanctifying Grace, and living by the supernatural virtues, especially Faith, Hope and, above all, Charity.

MYSTICAL—pertaining to the higher levels of sanctity, in which the soul's supernatural acts are carried out in a divine mode, in intimate dependence upon the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Christians who have not attained to this degree of sanctity perform their supernatural actions in a more human mode; in them the seven Gifts are relatively dormant. Mystical prayer is called contemplation. Phenomena such as visions and revelations, though often found in mystics, arc not of the essence of the mystical life.

Contemplation—the higher of the two forms of mental prayer (the lower being meditation). Contemplation is an infused loving knowledge of God. In contemplation, reasoning and discourse are left behind and the mind and will are fixed on God in a wordless act of love, resulting in close union with Him. Contemplation is also called mystical or infused prayer. It is a special gift of God and cannot be acquired by one's own efforts, even aided by actual grace. Nevertheless, one can and should prepare for this gift by humble and persevering efforts at meditation and by the practice of the virtues.

Meditation—the lower of the two forms of mental prayer. In meditation one employs his intellect and will in reflections, affections and holy resolutions.

Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Seven—Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, Fear (of the Lord). These Gifts are infused dispositions which make a man promptly docile to divine inspirations. They have traditionally been compared to the sails of a ship, enabling the ship to be moved by the wind—which represents the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Charisms, or Graces *Gratis Datae* ("Freely Given")—extraordinary spiritual gifts of God such as the gifts of miracles, prophecy and tongues. These are gifts given chiefly for the good of souls other than the recipient; graces *gratis datae* are greatly inferior to Sanctifying Grace and the virtue of Charity. The seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost are not graces *gratis datae*, rather, they are in the normal way of sanctity.

Actual Grace—a supernatural help of God which enlightens the mind and strengthens the will to do good and to avoid evil. Actual grace is a transient gift; it does not remain in the soul.

Books by the Author Translated into English

God, His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies (1914)

Christian Perfection and Contemplation, according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross (1923)

The Principles of Catholic Apologetics: A Study of Modernism based chiefly on the Lectures of Père Garrigou-Lagrangc, O.P., Adapted and Arranged (by Thomas Joseph Walshe, 1926)

The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus (1929)

Providence (1932)

Our Savior and His Love for Us (1933)

Predestination (1936)

♦The One God (1938)

The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude of Eternal Life (1938)

The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life (1938)

*The Trinity and God the Creator (1943)

♦Christ the Savior (1945)

The Priesthood and Perfection (1946)

Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought (1946)

Life Everlasting (1947)

♦Grace (1947)

The Priest in Union with Christ (1948)

The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life (1948)

♦The Theological Virtues—Vol. l: Faith (1948)

♦Beatitude (moral theology, 1951)

Last Writings (spiritual retreats, 1969)

Books by the Author Not Translated into English

Le sens commun: la philosophie de l'être et les formules dogmatiques (1909)

Saint Thomas et le neomolinisme (booklet, 1917)

De Revelatione per ecclesiam catholicam proposita (1918)

De methodo sancti Thomae speciatim de structura articulorum summae theologicae (booklet, 1928)

Le réalisme du principe de finalité (1932)

Le sens du mystère et le clair-obscur intellectuel: nature et surnaturel (1934)

Essenza e attualità del Tomismo

Dieu accessible à tous (booklet, 1941)

♦De Eucharistia: Accedunt de Paenitentia quaestiones dogmaticae (1942)

Les XXIV Theses Thomistes pour le 30e Anniversaire de leur Approbation (booklet, 1944)

Verite et immutabilité du dogme (booklet, 1947)

De virtutibus theologicis (1948)

About the Author

Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964) was a philosopher and theologian of great wisdom, learning and holiness, one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century. Born in Auch, France, as a young man he studied medicine at the University of Bordeaux before entering the Dominican Order in 1897. He completed his ecclesiastical studies under the direction of A. Gardeil. From 1909 until 1960 he taught fundamental, dogmatic and spiritual theology at what is now called the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum) in Rome, and he served during the latter part of his career as a consultor to the Holy Office and other Roman congregations. Beginning around age 27 he wrote more than 500 books and articles, many of which have been translated from the original French or Latin into other languages.

Father Garrigou-Lagrange was a zealous proponent of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas as expounded by the classical commentators of the Dominican school — Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio), Biifiez, John of St. Thomas and Charles Billuart. He combined a great respect for the past with an understanding and appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual needs of his own time. His principal theses are set forth systematically in his /<> *Synthese thomiste (Reality: .4 Synthesis of Thomistic Thought),* In philosophy his first outstanding work was *l.e* trm *commun, la philoiophic de I'flrr et* /<> *formules dogmatiqnei sumi d'unr* <9\«Λ' *I·' valeur de la critique moderniste des . ..... thomistes*

de l'existenee de Dieu (1909), a work written against Modernism and its conception of the evolution of dogma. There he reaffirmed the validity of the philosophy of being, of moderate realism, and of Aristotclian-Thomistic metaphysics, which is simply the development of elementary and primordial ideas by natural intelligence. Then turning to dogmatic formulas, which he did not wish to tie to any philosophical system, he showed their rational value and stability. Knowledge of dogma and of dogmatic expressions and formulas can progress, but the dogma remains always immutable in itself. Father Garrigou-Lagrange's most important philosophical work was *Cod—His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies;* in this work he laid great stress on the Thomistic doctrine concerning the identity of essence and existence in God and the real distinction of essence and existence in the creature.

The major part of Father Garrigou-Lagrange's work, however, was theological. His classic work entitled *De revelatione ab ecclesia proposita* (1918, rev. cd. 1932) presented apologetics as a theological rather than a philosophical science, as a rational defense of divine revelation made by reason under positive direction by faith. He endeavored to protect the notion of faith as an essentially supernatural gift that transcends by far the elaborations of human thought and cannot be the fruit of a rational syllogism, which can lead the mind no further than to the judgment of credibility; at the same time he strove to avoid the pitfail of a fideism that would ignore reason and human study. Father Garrigou-Lagrange's masterly commentary (7 vol.) on the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas is a comprehensive development and treatment of the truths of faith according to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is probably for his theology of the spiritual life that Father Garrigou-Lagrange is most well-known; in spiritual theology the principal points of his doctrine were established in the light of Thomistic teaching. Adopting the position of Father John Arintero, O.P., he insisted vigorously on the universal call to holiness, and therefore to infused contemplation and to the mystical life as the normal ways of holiness or Christian perfection. Among his most fundamental works in this field are *Christian Perfection and Contemplation; Les Trois conversions et les trois voies (The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life); The Love of God and the Cross ofJesus; The Three Ages of the Interior Life; De sanctificatione sacerdotum secundum exigentias temporis nostri (The Priesthood and Perfection);* and *De unione sacerdotis cum Christo Sacerdote et Victima (The Priest in Union with Christ).* He also wrote a book entitled *Mère Françoise de Jésus, fondatrice de la Compagnie de la Vierge,* as well as numerous articles for *La Vie Spirituelle* and *Angelicum.*

Other books of Father Garrigou-Lagrange which have been translated into English (in addition to those whose titles are given above in English) include: *Christ the Savior; The Theological Virtues—vol. 1: Faith; Grace; Life Everlasting; The One God; Our Savior and His Lovefor Us; Predestination; Providence; The Trinity and God the Creator; The Mother ofthe Saviour and Our Interior Life; Beatitude* (moral theology, on human acts and habits), and his retreat conferences, published posthumously as *The Last Writings of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.*

The publishers of this present work look forward to publishing other works of Father Garrigou-Lagrange, in accord with the response received by this one.

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